

Unpopular Bible Doctrines #12: Suffering, Jesus Doesn't Pray For All

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Unpopular Bible Doctrines

By Larry Wessels

Bible Text: Revelation 12:7-17; John 17:9,12

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Larry Wessels: Greetings and welcome to Christian Answers. I'm Larry Wessels, Director of Christian Answers and thank you for being with us today. Today we're doing a very special series of programs on Bible doctrines that are deemed to be unpopular. Now, joining me in this Unpopular Bible Doctrine series is my very special guest and Director of Pilgrim Publications, Bob L. Ross. Bob, great to have you here, brother.

Bob L. Ross: Thank you, Larry.

Larry: Bob L. Ross is one of the world's leading publishers of the works of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the famous Prince of Preachers from the 19th century. Now Bob for our audience, could you tell us a little bit about Charles Haddon Spurgeon and some of the works you have there with you?

Bob: Well Larry, probably most of the people listening to this program may be acquainted with Spurgeon because they would have an interest in Christian things and Spurgeon has been around a long time. But our interest in Spurgeon, of course, is in his sermons and works that were published in the 1800s, reprinting those and making them available. They are on the internet now more and more. They are being added to the internet, even many of his books and, of course, they are on cd rom and in many ways they are getting used in the world. One of the ways is this book here that we just recently did not too long ago anyway. It's Spanish sermons, Spurgeon in Spanish and there is a website now, a gentleman in Mexico City, a good friend of ours, is translating and putting Spurgeon sermons on the internet in Spanish and this is one of the first books that has been done, 36 sermons by Spurgeon on the Gospel, and this is the Spanish language edition of it. So we're trying to get Spurgeon known not only to the English speaking world of our generation but to other languages and in the United States where we have a great population of Spanish speaking people, we think this book will make a great contribution to helping to spread the Gospel.

Then we have another book and this is an unusual book. A gentleman read through the entire 3,563 sermons, I think, of Spurgeon's sermons. It took him about seven years to do it and he collected these quotations, over 5,000 illustrations and quotations from

Spurgeon on a variety of subjects. A lot of times people say, "I wonder what Spurgeon thought of that? I wonder what his idea was about this particular thing?" Well, you can go in here and he's got it indexed; he's got all the quotations referenced. Sometimes you pick up a book of quotations from Spurgeon and they're not referenced; you don't know where it came from. It could've come from John Doe and you'd never know but this man has it all referenced where you can find it in the context of the sermons themselves and traces down if you want to read it in context to see if that indeed was what it sounded like when you read the excerpt. So it's called "Exploring the Mind and Heart of the Prince of Preachers: C. H. Spurgeon," put together by Kerry J. Allen, a Baptist pastor from up in Illinois and this is one of our latest publications here that we are helping. We didn't actually publish this one but we're helping to distribute this book. So that's a little bit of information about Spurgeon.

Larry: Alright Bob and for our audience, anyone that is interested in more on this subject and particularly the works and sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, just call or write our ministry. You'll see those phone numbers and our address will be popping up at the end of the program so feel free to call or write. Also, if you'd like to get on our free newsletter mailing list, you can call or write to our ministry, Christian Answers, and you will receive a free subscription to the Christian Answers Newsletter whenever it comes out. So that is there and yours for the asking, basically.

Okay, the next him Unpopular Doctrine is Doctrine #53: God promises his people a "furnace of affliction" of suffering in this life. People need to understand that the biblical reality of this present life on planet earth is that we humans are in the midst of a cosmic war between God Almighty and Satan and his demonic legions. See Revelation 12:7-17.

Now, as far as this furnace of affliction goes, we can see Isaiah 48:10, God tests with the "furnace of affliction." Acts 14:22, through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4, we suffer affliction. 2 Thessalonians 1:4, Thessalonians endure persecutions and afflictions. John 16:33, in the world you will have tribulation. Romans 5:3-5, tribulation brings perseverance. Acts 9:16, the Lord says he will show Paul "how much he must suffer for my name's sake." Matthew 10:22. Mark 13:13. Luke 21:17, you shall be hated for my name's sake. John 15:18-27, the world hates you because it hated the Lord Jesus first. 2 Corinthians 11:23-33, Paul is beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, dangers of all sorts.

Look at the lives of the saints, David in the Psalms. He didn't live in a bed of roses. People were out to kill him. He was fighting battles all the time. Moses, in the first five books of the Bible, he went through many trials and tribulations. Of course, not to mention Jeremiah, Daniel and, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered much persecution and conflict and, of course, eventually was crucified.

Isaiah 48:10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

Acts 14:22. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

John 16:33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Acts 9:16. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Larry: Bob, any comments?

Bob: Well, yes Larry. I was thinking about this particular division of our messages today that we were going to do on the way over here and I thought about some of the afflictions that come to the people of God, their purpose, of course, known only to God and fulfilled in life by the Lord, the purpose that he might have for certain things that come and what we need to do as Christians, as believers, is embrace these afflictions for their purpose and for their glory that whatever purpose and glory they have for the Lord. And I was thinking about some of the Christians that have done this. Of course, you've got biblical examples like Paul. He said the marks he bore in his body for the Lord; he gloried in the sufferings that he had endured for the Lord and Paul had a lot of them to tell about. He accepted those things as the will of God and he embraced those things and he adjusted his life to those things and I think about a lot of good Christian people that I know or know about their lives and I jotted down a few names.

I have a friend of mine, Brother Emmet O'Donnell, who is afflicted more or less immobile but do you know what he does? He's got a website, Larry, and he's got over 35, I think, of Spurgeon's sermons on the internet. He has sat there day after day typing them out and thousands of people, they have a counter on the internet that can keep tabs of who comes and goes, he has thousands of people coming to read those sermons. Now, do you think he would have ever done that if he had remained healthy and normal? He might be out on the golf course or a fishing bank somewhere, you see, but God put him in that predicament and he says, "Brother Emmet, I have need of you. I want this ministry of Spurgeon's sermons put on the internet," and here he is doing it. I just know that Emmet can glory in his affliction. He can think, "Lord, I never would be doing this for the glory of God if it weren't for this handicap you've given me."

Then I think of Joni Eareckson. Everybody, just about, as a Christian knows her story and what a wonderful blessing she's been in the last 30-40 years since she had that paralyzing accident diving, I think, in a lake swimming.

Then Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn writer. Through her blindness, she could see spiritual things with a much more sharp focus than had she retained her eyesight and so she has become a blessing down through the years because of that.

I also think of you, Larry, in your own family. People may not know but you have had handicaps with some children that were born with handicaps and you have adjusted to that and served the Lord and been a great example and a challenge to others.

Larry: Yeah, the Lord...I look at my two handicapped children, Thomas who is severely brain damaged and Gloria who is moderately retarded and autistic, as actually blessings from God. By means of these children that God has given to me and my wife, it has allowed us to have more patience, understanding, to work with difficulties and overcome problems more had I not had these children in my life. Of course, I've been changing Thomas' diapers for 23 years now.

Bob: And you're a challenge and an encouragement to me as I have watched you now for, I asked you earlier how many years we've been doing these kinds of things and that goes back to 1990, and I've often been challenged by your dedication.

When I was a young Christian I thought, "Well, I've never had any persecution or trials and tribulations," so I got married and we had our first child and we had a second child and the first child was taken in an accident. Since that time, Larry, that has been a trial to me and I have tried to use that. We have a tract on infant salvation and I have his picture on the front.

Larry: I've seen it.

Bob: And we put them out by the thousands and a lot of people have been blessed because of it. This probably would have never happened if my son had not met with this accident when he was 22 months old for these thousands of messages to go out to people that have lost children and now they can read this sermon by Spurgeon, how that children, infant children, are with the Lord. So I, in a sense, I've had an affliction all these years...

Larry: ...but God has used it to his glory and that's what he does with all of us in all our lives. The furnace of affliction, as we mentioned, with much tribulation we will enter the kingdom of heaven but God uses it to his glory.

Bob: And you and I are no exceptions. I mean, the Bible says that if we believe on him we will also suffer.

Larry: That's right. The servant is not greater than his master. If the master suffers, you're going to suffer.

Bob: God has not only ordained that we believe, he's also ordained that we shall suffer. So there are other people who have different problems, different challenges, different afflictions and they learn to embrace those things and use them for the glory of God.

Larry: I still think it's interesting, a lot of people don't seem to realize it but one of the first things God told Paul on the road to Damascus there in Acts 9, he said, "I'll show you what great things you will suffer for my name's sake." How would you like to have somebody walk up to you, tell you,...

Bob: "Hey, I've got a job for you. By the way, you're going to be thrown in some jails."

Larry: "You're going to suffer."

Bob: "You're going to be beaten and you're going to be dragged out of the city and left for dead."

Larry: That's right. So God promises every believer a lot of suffering. You don't get that from a lot of these tv evangelists. They're talking about being healthy and wealthy and it's like they're totally ignoring what the Scripture promises the true believers of God.

Let's move on to our next Unpopular Doctrine, Doctrine #54: Jesus does not pray for everyone. We find this in John 17:9, 12, Jesus does not pray for the world but the ones he does pray for are saved; others not prayed for by Jesus, are lost such as Judas. You see that in John 13:18, cross-reference that to Psalm 41:9. Also in John 6:70, Jesus says that one of his disciples is a devil. 1 John 2:15-17, do not love the world or its lusts for it is passing away. John 6:37-40, 44, 63-65, only those chosen or drawn by the Father believe in Jesus and are saved unto eternal life; the unbelieving will be damned to hell. Ephesians 1:4-11, believers of Jesus will be saved because they were predestined by God to be saved from damnation to hell before the foundation of the world. That is why Jesus does not pray for everyone.

John 17:9-12. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

1 John 2:15-17. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Larry: Okay Bob, we've got some pretty serious stuff here. A lot of people think Jesus is this meek and mild Jesus, sort of like a hairdresser that you see on the Bravo channel perhaps or one of these other real modernistic type channels and he's wearing a flowing robe and he's got the designer beard cut and hair cut and everything and he's all nice and he loves everybody and he's reaching out to everybody, "Oh, please be one of my disciples. I'm a good guy. Do what you can for me." You know, a lot of people have this kind of image of Jesus because of all the preaching that people hear, "Love, love, love." He's almost like a 1960s psychedelic hippie that's out there with his love-in type stuff. Well, the problem is when we look in the Bible we don't find Jesus doing that sort of thing. We find him saying a lot of hard doctrine to people where his disciples leave him.

He's saying a bunch of stuff that gets people mad and upset and now all of a sudden we find out that he's not even praying for everybody. Any comments?

Bob: Well, Jesus was a very practical prayer. He said in one place that whatever he asked of the Father, the Father would do so Jesus had to be careful, so to speak, on what he asked for. By the way, we have to be careful too, Larry, because we might get what we're praying for and we might not like it. You know, I heard a story about that. One time this fellow prayed for a wife and he got her but it turned out he wished he had that prayer back. Anyway, just easing there.

But Jesus was a very practical prayer. He said, "Father, I pray not for the world, I pray for those you have given me out of the world." Now, you don't waste your prayers where they're not going to do any good. Now, I know people might say, "Oh, I pray for everybody." Well, how much of those prayers are doing any good for these people that you don't even know who everybody is? You don't know what their needs are. We should try to pray intelligently like Jesus did. I don't just pray for the world, "I'm praying for those people I know you have given me out of the world. They need my prayers. I know what they're going to be facing." So Jesus prayed that way.

This reminds me of a story Spurgeon told. A woman came up to him and said, "Would you pray for me to be saved?" He said, "Why do you need to pray to be saved?" She said, "Oh, I need you to pray for me so I will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," or whatever. He said, "No, I'll not pray for you." She was shocked, "What? You won't pray for me?" "No, you know Jesus Christ and you won't believe on him for salvation. What good is my prayer going to do you?" And it shook her up. She said, "Oh, I see it now, I just have to believe on him, right?" And she believed and was saved. So Spurgeon wouldn't pray for her as long as she was rejecting the Gospel. What good would it do? He was a practical prayer.

Larry: Just like Jesus.

Bob: So that's the thing about when we study the prayers of Jesus, we don't find just these shotgun prayers, "Lord, bless the world. Lord, bless the nation and give them peace. Lord, heal everybody that's hurting." You've heard prayers in church, Larry, they go up and there's nothing specifically requested but what answers do you get? Nothing specific. You don't get any direct answers. So we need to learn to pattern our prayers after the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray for those that need our prayers and for what purpose they need our prayers that God would do something for them.

Larry: That's right and those prayers should be within the will of God. A lot of times you get these health and wealth preachers that are praying, "O Lord, give me lots of money. Give me lots of health."

Bob: "More money. More money."

Larry: "Money cometh." Give me a bumper sticker that says "Money cometh" and I can stick it on my car so that everybody can see.

Bob: "Money, thou art loosed."

Larry: Right, "Loose all the money in the world on me so I can have it." You get these kinds of prayers which aren't in the will of God yet you get a lot of these tv preachers with these kinds of prayers but if they go back to what the biblical idea of prayer is, it gets back to what you're saying, praying within the will of God, praying the practical prayers that make sense within what God has already revealed to us.

Bob: Not only that, Larry, not only practical prayers but prayers that are meaningful for more than just a day or two. I'm sure that maybe if you have a severe headache you might pray, "Lord, take away this headache." Well, if it goes away, you know, for a day or two, you've got the relief but shouldn't we be focusing more on things that are going to be of eternal consequence? My goodness, there are people that are all around us that are lost: our neighbors and children. And all around us it looks like we can zero in on some lost people to call them by name and try to say, "Well Lord, save this person over here. This person is named So-and-so. They live at So-and-so," and just get a little more direct about it on things that are really of eternal consequence rather than this, "My belly hurts and my head hurts or I need a new car," or something like that. There is more selfishness motivating their prayer than interest for others.

Larry: That's right. Alright with that said, brother, let's move on to our next Unpopular Doctrine #55: God commands his people to defend the Christian faith against the false teachings of false prophets. We can find this in Jude 3. Philippians 1:7, 17, being set for the confirmation and defense of the Gospel. Titus 1:9, refute the gainsayers with sound doctrine. 2 Timothy 3:15-17, doctrine for reproof, for correction in righteousness that the man of God may be prepared. 1 Timothy 4:6, 13, 16, all about sound doctrine, knowing sound doctrine, holding onto sound doctrine. Acts 17:17. Acts 18:24. Acts 19:8 where you have many public debates shown there and, of course, examples of Jesus debating the scribes and the Pharisees in the marketplaces throughout the Gospel records.

Philippians 1:7, 17. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace....But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Titus 1:9. Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

2 Timothy 3:15-17. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Larry: As people can see, Jude 3 is a key passage. In fact, for 15 years we were doing live television shows, a call-in Bible show, and I would read this every month when we would do our live tv show. It says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Now, the interesting statement there is "once delivered to the saints." In other words, there is a message that has been conveyed to us that has been delivered once to the saints and there are not a bunch of other messages. There is this one message and we're to defend that one message that has been given to the saints and to do it earnestly and that message is what we find here in the word of God, the Bible. So as Christians we are to take this word of God and defend it against all these people that come up with all these other ideas like, "Well, Jesus didn't really rise from the dead." The Jehovah's Witnesses will say, "Well, Jesus, his body turned into gases and then Jehovah God recreated him as the archangel Michael later." You've got all these other guys that argue all kinds of other weird doctrines that say God is...the nation of Islam will say that there are 12 black gods who created the world and white men are the creation of an evil mad scientist named Yakob and that's why white men are devils, that's according to Elijah Mohammed and Wallace Fard and Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam.

So you've got all these different religions saying different things and they also talk about Jesus. The Rastafarians say that Jesus is an astronaut that came from outer space with some messages and you get that also in the religion from the Urantia book which purportedly was brought to us by space aliens. So you've got all these different messages but this right here in Jude 3, it says there has been one message, once delivered to the saints, earnestly contend. Any comments?

Bob: Well, that expression "once delivered" is similar to an expression in Hebrews "he died once for all," and as you said, that just is an expression of finality. "Once delivered," that's a final issue. "Once for all," that's a final issue. It doesn't have to be repeated over and over again.

Larry: Are you saying that Mohammed coming 600 years after Christ comes up with this Koran and a new religious idea would not apply in this case?

Bob: Well, not if it means what it sounds like. This is the once for all message and that's it. Close the door. Close the gate. Shut the book up and that's it.

Now when it comes to defending the faith, that is something that is more or less circumstantial. You are in your locale, I'm in my locale and we don't always have the same, you might say, attacks or efforts to undermine the faith that others will have. We have a world here. We're talking about the different things in different places. But the beauty, Larry, is that the once delivered faith is answerable to anyone on the earth. I mean, it doesn't matter if you're over here in Europe and the faith is being undermined by someone. You may be in Asia. You may be in Australia. You may be in South America. You may be in Canada. You may be in Mexico. You may be in Texas. The faith is the

one and only and same everywhere and the big gun of the faith is Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Bible is the word of God and so therefore you don't have to, you might say, change your weaponry. You've got the same guns. You've got the same powder. And like the Scripture says, "The Gospel is the power of God, the salvation everyone is to believe in."

So that's the beauty of the Christian faith, it's good for all that ails the world. It can answer every false idea, everything philosophy. I heard a radio program on the way over here and a man was telling a story about this fellow who had read all these great philosophers and he was standing there looking at all these books: Aristotle, Plato, Copernicus, whoever, and the Bible. He said, "Do you know something about that book that none of these others have in common with it?" He said, "What that?" He said, "I've read all these other books, every one of them, page one to the last page," and he said, "I've read this book." He said, "This book will change people. These other books don't have any effect on them. This book will make a sober man out of a drunkard. This book will make a pure woman out of a harlot. This book will make an honest man out of a thief. But these other books, they have no affect on them."

So there you have it, Larry, the word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior, this faith is suitable for all diversions and aberrant lifestyles and whatever the world over by whatever name and by whatever wickedness. The Bible is the answer to those situations.

Larry: Amen. I can't resist at this point before we move onto our next Unpopular Doctrine, most people don't like this idea because they don't know enough about the Bible to even defend the faith because they don't know enough about what the word of God says to get in there and defend the faith against heretics, liars, whoever may be coming...

Bob: ...thieves and robbers.

Larry: Exactly. So one reason this doctrine is so unpopular is because it will require people to study to show themselves approved, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Heaven forbid they'd have to study the Bible to be able to defend the Bible. That's why it's unpopular because people don't want to do that in the first place.

Bob: Do you know, Larry, every proselyte to a false religion, I would say 999 out of 1,000, it's because that person didn't know the Bible and he got easily seduced.

Larry: Exactly. And so I can't resist at this point, Bob, I want to ask you because you have been in some public debates and there are a lot of people that argue that you shouldn't be in public debates but I couldn't resist at this moment knowing that you have been in a lot of debates yourself, public debates, and just out of pure interest and curiosity, could you just mention some of the debates you've been in over the years?

Bob: Well, I think I have been in not a whole lot. I've been in maybe about 15 or 16 what we call public debates where there was an audience and then I've had a few on tv as you very well know, some of the ministers on tv. Went up to Georgia one time and had one on tv. So all told, maybe 20-25 debates, counting the tv debates, radio debates. But public debates is where that you have an audience and you have moderators. You have propositions and you agree to abide by the rules of debate; you conduct yourself in accordance with those rules. I've had some very satisfactory experiences in debate.

One thing about my debates that I always like to remind people because some people think I go and seek debates, I have never been in a debate, Larry, where I was the challenger. It's always been the other person who challenged me to the debate and I'm a little bit proud of that because I didn't instigate the debate, they did. So I was kind of in a position there, win/win situation as I look at it and I've had quite successful debates with emphasis on the truth that we were debating and some visible results from people in debates that have professed to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Larry: What year was it the first time you had a debate, public debate?

Bob: My first debate was in Ashland, Kentucky where I lived at the time and I believe it was 1960 and had eight nights.

Larry: Eight nights of debating with a crowd out there, an audience.

Bob: Not only that but even before the first debate started, I was challenged to another debate. The moderator, the gentleman I was debating brought a proposition to the platform and challenged me publicly to debate that so I signed it.

Larry: And these debates were all based on biblical propositions.

Bob: All on Bible doctrines of various things and whether or not you have to be baptized to be saved or whether or not you're saved before you're baptized and whether or not you can lose your salvation and just a variety of subjects like indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Larry: I remember that debate.

Bob: Which church is practicing the Bible correctly on certain things. I've had two debates on whether or not it's right to use instrumental music in worship.

Larry: There are some churches that teach that if you have a piano or some kind of instrumental music you'll go to hell for it.

Bob: Yeah, there are quite extremes on that that you can't use musical instruments or you might jeopardize your soul.

Larry: I know you had...our ministry offers a 22 hour debate that you participated in with a minister named Bill Jackson. 22 hours of debate material. That was a week long debate right there.

Bob: That was a little trouble you got me into if you remember. You got on the television and blabbed some things and then you got challenged, I believe. Didn't they challenge you?

Larry: That's right. They challenged us to a debate.

Bob: So you were really the one that caused that debate but Bill Jackson, the late Bill Jackson, a nice fellow, I enjoyed the debate with him and always remember that. By the way, you have that on dvd.

Larry: Dvd and vhs.

Bob: I was talking to Larry about that before. I want to get some copies of that myself on dvd and then you have my other three debates on dvd.

Larry: That's right. Your musical instruments debate. Your Holy Spirit debate where your adversary is calling you Mr. Holy Spirit Man. I thought that was kind of interesting.

Bob: So you have, what do you call it, the treasury of Bob Ross debates, Brother Larry.

Larry: Along with a lot of other debates but yes, I've got all yours.

Bob: And you are quite the, what's the word? Media man with all these cassette recordings and video recordings and dvds and cds and what next?

Larry: Well, whatever technology comes up with, we'll be ready.

Bob: What are you going to do next, Larry?

Larry: But I couldn't resist bringing all this up for our viewers because this is the epitome of someone who would defend the faith according to Scripture. Just like the apostles in the Bible did, they went out in public debate and they fought for the truth, defending the faith against false prophets.

Bob: Well, sometimes debates get a bad reputation, a bad rap, because the people in them do not conduct themselves ethically and courteously and as gentleman. Fortunately in the vast majority of my debates, they've all gone very smoothly. Maybe a little rocky spot here and there but overall I can look back at them and say that they behaved themselves and I behaved myself and we didn't bring any reproach, discredit on debating to a great degree.

Larry: The most interesting in one of my televised debates, I remember my adversary jumped up. He got so upset with me he jumped out of his chair, came over across the studio to where I was and yanked a book out of my hands that I was reading from at the time. I kind of just sat there in astonishment. Then he was wondering what page I was on and, of course, do you think I was crazy enough to tell him where it was? I was going to let him stand there and look foolish.

Anyway, debating can be quite an enlightening experience for people because then they get both sides of the story. They can hear the arguments from both sides and check the Scriptures for themselves to see what they think. Anyway, I couldn't resist with in my opinion a master debater that gets out there and does his job for the Lord over all these years.

With that, let's go on to our next Unpopular Bible Doctrine #56 and as you can see on your screen: God intentionally performs miracles for people he knows will not believe or repent and he does not perform miracles for people he knows would believe and repent if they saw them. Your classic text here to prove this is in Matthew 11:20-27 where Jesus is basically cursing the unrepentant cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Also Luke 10:12-16. We can also look at Exodus 7 through 14 where you see that Pharaoh saw all the miracles but still remained unrepentant. Then also Numbers 16 where you have the rebellion of Korah and his followers, where throughout the chapter, even with such miracles as Korah being swallowed up by the earth, still there are people upset about that and were willing to rebel against Moses.

Matthew 11:20-27. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Numbers 16:29-33, 41, 49. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that

appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation...But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD...Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

Larry: Alright Bob, we've got a situation here where God is doing miracles for people he knows aren't going to believe it and aren't going to repent even when they are seeing these miracles as Jesus testifies there in Matthew 11, but then he also says in Matthew 11 that Sodom and Gomorrah, if they had seen these miracles there, they would have repented but yet God did not do those miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah but he did them over here where they could see them but they weren't going to believe it. Now, what do you have to say about this?

Bob: Well, all I can say is that the song says that God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform. Sometimes in trying to figure out the whys and wherefores of God's activity, we are looking at it, Larry, from the standpoint of, "What would I do?" We're not saying, "Well, what would Jesus do?" but "What would I do in this situation?" Of course, we've got to get away from that. We've got to look at the circumstance and see what the message is. The miracles are attached to messages in most instances and it's the message you want to focus on. What is the Lord saying here in connection with this miracle?

Was it verse 21 you were quoting? "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." What's the message? "You should repent but you are stubborn. You are rebellious. You're wanting your own way. And you're going to have a greater judgment because of this. I mean, if I had done these miracles back yonder with those cities, they would have repented. You're in a worse condition than they are so you'd better take heed and get your act together and straighten up and fly right or you're going to be in mucho big trouble with the Lord."

He said, "It would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom." Now, that's awful, isn't it? He destroyed Sodom but it's going to be more tolerable on they day of judgment. They're going to have a lesser punishment, justice poured out upon them, than you because you have rejected these miracles that were done in your presence. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted in heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." That shows you the comparative wickedness. A lot of people think of Sodom, "Oh, it was an awful place." Sure it was but I can tell you one worse, this one right here: Capernaum. Because Jesus said, "If I had done these miracles back there in Sodom, they would have remained. Anyhow, you have rejected these miracles." That just shows you that we have to look at the message and that gives us a key as to the questions you asked about the miracles, why some place the miracles and not at other places. If he performed the miracles back in Sodom, Sodom would have remained which means God in his sovereignty shows not to spare Sodom, right?

Larry: That's right because he didn't do the miracles for them.

Bob: Because if he had done the miracles, they would have remained. He chose not to and, again, another unpopular doctrine, that God has a right to exercise his mercy and sovereignty as he pleases.

Larry: In fact it kind of reminds me of "unto him much is given, much is required," so these cities are given these mighty miracles and now much is required because they were given these miracles where less is required of others and are less responsible.

Bob: And there's another thing here, Larry, we should say about miracles. So many people in religious context think that, "Oh, if we could just have some miracles. Oh, how wonderful that would be." And so they try to conjure up something miraculous and they want you to believe, "Oh, this one was healed of cancer or whatever, blindness or deafness or whatever."

Larry: Like these tv preachers, these health and weathl.

Bob: "This one was even raised from the dead."

Larry: So like Benny Hinn.

Bob: And on and on and on you hear these things. What's this supposed to do? Well, they think that it embellishes their particular worship or preaching or faith or whatever....

Larry: ...or ministry.

Bob: No, that doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way and so you can see it right here that the miracles that were done in Capernaum did not convert Capernaum. What converts people? Two things: the word of God, Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," and the Holy Spirit, Paul said, "Our word came not in word only but in power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit." So the word of God coming with the power of the Spirit, he is the sword bearer. The word is the sword, sharper than any two-edged sword and in the hand of the Spirit, that sword cuts into the heart, cuts into the soul, slays the man and brings him into submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only thing that will bring men successfully, permanently into the kingdom of God. You can't do it with miracles.

Larry: Now, how many miracles did Pharaoh in Exodus see of God?

Bob: No man was ever converted in his heart by miracles. It doesn't work that way. It takes the word of God and the Spirit.

Larry: So here's Pharaoh with Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner, he's seeing one miracle after another, Pharaoh is, does he repent? Does he repent of the sin or does he still try to go and destroy the Israelites in the Red Sea?

Bob: Then you think of a man like Judas who was with Jesus a lot.

Larry: That's right. Judas is there...

Bob: ...and saw these miracles that Jesus did from place to place. They didn't convert Judas. So we learn from this that the message attached to the miracles is what we're to focus on, not to think that the miracles themselves are going to have some great lasting spiritual effects. That's why Jesus told his disciples, "Greater works than these you'll do." Why? Because they'd be preaching the word of God and that's a greater work than doing a miracle. You'll be seeing converts preaching the word of God all over the country where you're going and that's a greater work than healing a blind man over here or raising the dead.

Larry: You just quoted Jesus in a sort of a way in Matthew 7:21-23. He was talking about these guys who are not known by God are going to be rejected but they claim to be Christians and, "Lord, Lord, did we not do many miracles in your name? Cast out demons in your name?" But, you see, it goes back to what you're saying, that didn't do them any good because he tells them that apart from him....

Bob: So many of our preachers, bless their hearts, want to wear the badges of, "I'm a miracle worker." On the way up here today, I passed a church back down in Houston and on the sign out front it had the preachers name and it said, "A true prophet." And do you know what I thought? Well, another false prophet. When you start advertising and wearing your buttons and badges and ribbons and patting yourself on the back and all this, you're just a marked man to somebody who knows the Bible because these miracles badges you're wearing, "I raised this one from the dead. I healed this one from cancer. God used me," or whatever, it just marks you as one not to be trusted.

Larry: Well Bob, we're just about out of time for this program. I want to let our viewers know that they can call or write us for free information on this subject or other subjects that we have available through Christian Answers. The phone number and the mailing address are at the end of the program. You'll also see our websites and email address so you are more than welcome to contact us that way. Bob, I'd like you to take just another quick moment here and mention Pilgrim Publications and the works of Spurgeon that are available through your ministry that people can contact through us if they are interested. Go ahead.

Bob: Well Larry, the primary thing that I have been involved in in my life for several years now has been the publication, distribution of the works of Spurgeon. I do other things but this is primarily what I am engaged in and if people are interested in the publications we have of Spurgeon, we'll be glad to furnish them a price list of all the

various titles that we have available which would include his sermons and several books and many other publications that we have by or about Spurgeon.

Furthermore, we have a video on the life of Spurgeon done by Dr. Kenneth Connolly and he did a very good job in giving us a one hour biography of Spurgeon. He went to England and he filmed all over the place over there where Spurgeon was born and was converted and baptized and pastored and all that. That's available.

And we have Spurgeon on cd rom, his sermons and other works are on cd-rom and also not too long ago we did a story of my trip to England, my pilgrimage to Spurgeon country where we filmed all of these localities that are identified with Spurgeon's life and ministry and what went on in those places, just a brief summary about the life of Spurgeon.

Larry: Very good, brother. Well, that's it for our program today. Thank you again for joining us in this series of Unpopular Bible Doctrines. We'll be back again for our next program so join us for that. In the meantime, I'm Larry Wessels with Christian Answers. Bob L. Ross. Bob, thanks for being with us from Pilgrim Publications. We'll see you next time and remember Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except by me," Jesus said. So through Jesus Christ is the way of salvation unto the eternal God. Thank you so much. God bless you all.

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