

## Ask Jeff 5.17.17

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**Crossroads Ministries**

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If there's somebody or a situation, a scenario that we as a church need to be praying for, we don't just pray for church members so we pray for those who are your friends, your neighbors whether they're near or they're far, we want to be able to pray for them so please let us be aware of that so that we can put it on our prayer sheet. Secondly, do not throw this away tonight. Take it home with you. Make it a point to walk through this hopefully on a regular basis as you pray for those that are not just a part of our family but are connected to our family.

Always on the bottom of the first sheet, you'll see a sympathy section for those who have lost loved ones and friends, you want to pray for them and their comfort, and on the back we have those that I am particularly partial to, those serving in the military and on the mission field. I want to make it a regular point of praying for them on a regular basis. Speaking of mission field, this Sunday in two of our three services, we are going to be recognizing those that are going to serve on the mission field this summer. We have numerous individuals, families, adults, children, as well as college students and we're going to be having kind of a commissioning service where we pray for them as they prepare to go, some overseas and some just around the corner. We already have some that are already on the mission field for the summer, some of our college students, but we're going to be praying for them particularly this Sunday morning.

That being said, let's pray and we'll get started.

*Lord, as we gather tonight, Lord, we recognize that we are a blessed blessed people. It's a blessing not just to be in this place but to be a part of these friends and our church family and, Lord, we're grateful for those that have been here for decades, for those that have been here just a few days, how you're continuing to put the pieces together of what you desire to do not just here in East Alabama but in all of the world. That being said, Lord, there are those on this prayer sheet that some of them are right around the corner in the hospital and some of them are on the other side of the world and, God, we just want to lift them all to you knowing that every situation, every scenario, everything that's happening in any of their lives, you're not just aware of but you are beyond capable of addressing. And so, God, we pray if it be possible tonight, that you would give comfort to those who need comfort, give hope to those who need hope, give healing to those who are hurting. Lord, we also pray that you give restoration to those that are broken and, God, tonight we do pray that as we search your word, that we would hear clearly what your*

*desire is for our lives. May we not come with our agenda, with our philosophies or with our ideas but may we be just an open slate that you write upon our heart with your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Alright, tonight you have gathered on Wednesday night here at First Baptist, Opelika for a very unique Bible study. We call it Ask Jeff but this Bible study is completely drive by you. Everything we deal with is your question whether you have submitted it on the website, by a piece of paper, or even raised your hand, and so tonight those of you that were here last week, we had our first of three big announcements. Tonight is announcement number 2, but being a good "pastor," I'm going to go back to number 1. That being said, this summer we're going to have the privilege of having the Ask Jeff summer tour. Some of you say, "Well, I didn't know about the Ask Jeff summer tour." Well, I didn't do the summer tour last summer because I was moving to Opelika. It's kind of hard to go around places when you're just trying to get here. That being said, beginning on June 2, right here on Friday night from 7-9 we're going to have a marathon Ask Jeff session. The first half will be an indepth study of your questions, the second half we'll be going through every single question, making sure that every one of them is addressed at some level. June 24, we're going to be in the Atlanta area. July 13, the southeast Louisiana area. And on July 14, the Dallas, Fort Worth area. That being said, that is our summer tour.

Now for announcement number 2, are y'all ready for this one? Here we go, the next big announcement that it has been years in waiting but now has finally borne fruit: we now have the Ask Jeff website and app for your computer and for your phone. Now it's askjeff.net. Let me make that clear, it's askjeff.net. If you go to askjeff.com, it's some European graphic designer so you don't want to go there, alright? So it's askjeff.net. The website is fully functioning and available. The app has been approved and is in process and probably will be available in the next week to two weeks. We'll keep you up-to-date with that.

Here's what I want you to know about the app. The live coverage of our Wednesday night study, the archives of previous studies, information and such are available. What's most important for those of you here at First Baptist, Opelika, there is nothing on that app that is not also on our church website as well. What it does for you is just kind of keeps you from having to jump from one page to another. You can go directly to it. They will be mirror sites as far as the information that is available, the messages, the archives, submitting a question, whatever it may be. So as you go whether you go to the First Baptist website, whether you go to the Ask Jeff website, there's no content that's, for lack of better terms, different, it's just making it easier for you to either, A: submit a question, B: watch the videos, or C: to listen to the audio files.

So just wanted you to be aware of that, that that website is up and running, askjeff.net. The app will soon be available. So that was announcement number 2. Number 1, the summer tour. 2. The website is up and functioning, the app is soon to come. And next week is big announcement numero 3.

Alright, here we go, back to the database and we will get started. As I mentioned, for those of you that are guests or visitors, everything that we deal with tonight is some question that you have asked. Website [fbcopelika.com/askjeff](http://fbcopelika.com/askjeff), piece of paper, whatever it may be, it goes into a database. We do not pull them chronologically, in other words, we don't start with the one that was asked the furthest back and go to the one that was asked the most recently, it's completely algorithm, at random.

Question number 1 tonight: what is the concept of original sin, and why does the Baptist church not celebrate infant baptism through effusion?

That is an absolute fabulous question because there are two main issues that have separated Christendom for years. Now when I say Christendom, that's a different word than Christianity. Christianity are those who are believers in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. Christendom are those who operate or who verbalize their lives according to a "Christian philosophy." Let me tell you what I mean by that. If you've ever driven up the east coast and even sometimes here in this part of the world, you will see people who advertise their services and say, "If you need someone who does trustworthy carpentry, I'm a fine Christian man." We know in the south that just means, "I'm honest and not gonna rip you off." It really has nothing to do with one's personal faith or it could have something to do with one's personal faith. There are lots of systems and denominations and individuals who claim to be under the umbrella of Christianity, however, when allowed to be examined by scripture, do not have faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Why is that so important? Because when I say Christendom, the issue of baptism and the issue of the Lord's Supper have been the two most discussed, debated issues throughout all of time, and the question tonight deals with baptism, particularly infant baptism in light of the concept of original sin. Now I think everyone of us, no matter what our background is, your background could be Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, whatever it is, all of us agree that we come out bad, right? If you don't believe me, go volunteer in the preschool Sunday morning. We come out bad. What's the first word we learn? No. What's the first sound we learn? Uh-uh. I mean, that's who we are as humanity. We come out bad. None of us are going to argue that we come out bad.

The doctrine of original sin. If you're not familiar with the formalization of that, it actually began about 1,500 years ago with a very famous theologian who we know as Augustine. Now those of you who are very formal academicians, we would call him Augustine, but for those of us that are in the south, he's Augustine. That being said, I want you to go to Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is one of the passages that those who subscribe to original sin utilize. Now what is the doctrine of original sin? The doctrine of original sin is the idea that we come into the world, we breathe our first breath and we're not only sinful by disposition but we are damned by declaration. Let me expand on that. That means that the first day of your physical life, you don't just have a disposition to sin, you are already condemned in your sin because you are sinful in nature. How does that differ from what only not only do I believe that the Bible proclaims but most of us in our Christian tradition believe? We believe that we have a disposition to sin, correct? We all do, in fact, 1 Corinthians 15 says in Adam all die. We know that but we would also claim

that we are not responsible to or accountable to our sin until we even understand what sin is in our lives. The doctrine of original sin states that you're not only having a disposition to sin but that you are held accountable to your sin the first day of your physical life, alright?

Psalm 51 historically is King David responding after he has been exposed by the prophet Nathan regarding his, shall we say, not so biblical relationship with a woman by the name of Bathsheba. Psalm 51 says,

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:  
according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my  
transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me  
from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever  
before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in  
thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear  
when thou judgest. [Listen to verse 5,] 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Now that verse, verse 5 of Psalm 51, is one of a few verses that not just Augustine but some others have gravitated to and have said not only do we come into the world with a propensity to sin but they would even claim, and I'm not here in biology class so I'm going to make it theologically savvy here, that the natural process by which humanity is conceived is a sinful act in and of itself as well. Procreation is sinful, birth is sinful, and the first day of our life we are accountable to our sin because it says that in sin did my mother conceive me.

Now here's the problem I have with that. It may be a formalized theological position but the Lord told us as humanity to be fruitful and multiply, correct, did he not? I mean, now sin enters the world, then Noah gets off the boat. When Noah gets off the boat, what does God tell them to do? Be fruitful and multiply. James 1 says God does not tempt man to sin nor is there any sin that we can attribute to him. So if God tells us to be fruitful and multiply and God does not lead us to sin, how can the act of procreation be sinful when done in a biblical marriage context? It can't be. However, when you take verse 5 out of Psalm 51 and you allow it to stand on its own as an independent system, you can see how you can read that as the doctrine of original sin.

So I believe biblically speaking the idea that procreation is sinful is erroneous, also this idea of original sin means that on day 1 that you're born, because you are held accountable to your sin, those that subscribe to this doctrine believe that you must be "baptized" to wash your sin away. Now that brings up a whole other context because I would argue biblically that it is not baptism that washes us from our sins but it is baptism that declares to the world that Jesus has washed us of our sins in his blood. And so the doctrine of original sin is erroneous on multiple counts, not only the idea of human procreation and God's declaration that we were to be fruitful and multiply, secondly, the idea that we are damned upon our disposition on day 1, and three, that somehow getting dunked in water makes us right with God. Water doesn't make us right with God, it just

makes us wet in front of God, is what it does. And so those who would subscribe to original sin make it a practice, we call it pedobaptism or baptism of infants, that they will take a child at the earliest of age and they will go through a baptism "process or ritual," and they're doing that so to, in their eyes, wash that original sin away. That is the "doctrine of original sin" in its full capacity. When was it embraced? About 1,500 years ago, what we know as the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Where is it practiced? Everywhere in the world today under the umbrella of Christendom but not under the tenets of Christianity.

And so that is the doctrine of original sin. Hopefully I addressed it in adequacy. Any other questions about infant baptism? Oh, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Well, everything kind of relates back to Adam and Eve.

[unintelligible]

Well, okay, I think the context you're coming from because he's asking how does the doctrine of original sin go back to Adam and Eve? I think this is where we have to take two roads: disposition or damnation. Alright, I'm going to tell you, I know those are stark words but let me use them. I think you and I would agree, you go all the way back to Adam and Eve, thanks to their sin and rebellion every one of us comes out bad, every one of us has a disposition to sin. The question on original sin is are we accountable to God for our birth in sin, day 1, or is it when we finally grasp and understand what sin is that we're now responsible to. 1 Corinthians 15 says in Adam all die and because of Adam sin has entered the world. We all agree with that. So to your point, sir, you're right, sin began with them and we've been bad every since. The question is when are we accountable to our sin and does the washing of an infant absolve him of that original sin? Well, if you're not accountable to your sin day 1, then there would be no need to be washed either which brings up the other point, does washing in water actually even address our sin issue, which I would say biblically does not.

Does that help with Adam and Eve at all? A little bit? Anybody else on this one? It's a big issue in a lot of places. Y'all got it covered? Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Oh boy, I get nervous when they say, "Just a comment."

[unintelligible]

You were sprinkled as a baby?

[unintelligible]

No, no, no. You know, all of the churches that practice pedobaptism or child baptism in their nurseries their kids cry too, you know? And by the way, you know, those of you that have a medical or biological background may find this humorous but one of the rationales behind this original doctrine of original sin 1,500 years ago was the belief that the evidence of our sinfulness was the fact that when we came out, we came out crying. No, we just want to breathe, is what it is. But nonetheless, to your point, it didn't change you because all you did was get a little bath as a young child.

[unintelligible]

Excuse me.

[unintelligible]

And you don't even remember it, absolutely. Any other infant baptism child issues? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay.

[unintelligible]

Oh no. No, no, no, no, Oh no. I wouldn't....

[unintelligible]

No, no, no, and I was trying to keep it PG tonight. But hey, brother, hey, you... Here's what I love about Wednesday night. I can't be blamed for this one, this one's your fault. Here we go. Let me expand on that because obviously I didn't make myself clear. Those who subscribe to the doctrine of original sin believe that even the act of procreation is sinful. That is why those who typically subscribe to the doctrine of original sin say that intimacy between a husband and wife should only take place for the purpose of procreation.

[unintelligible]

Yes, and thankfully I'm a Baptist and we don't go there. Does that communicate?

[unintelligible]

Yes. You mentioned the term Roman Catholicism, you're absolutely correct. That is one of the entities that we could give a name to that would subscribe that the very act itself is sinful. However, the Apostle Paul made it very clear, he said that if you burn, marry. And I'm going to confess that I burned so I married. How's that for honesty? So there is, I find

no biblical justification that the intimacy between a husband and a wife under biblical guidelines in any way, shape or form can be seen ungodly, so to speak.

[unintelligible]

Okay, did I address that okay because I'd really like to change subjects right now. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

1 Corinthians 3, yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay. As a forester, wood is good to you, isn't it? Okay, alright, if you have a Bible, turn to 1 Corinthians 3, beginning in verse 10. We're going to read the anti-forestry passage of scripture here. No. Remember, it's an illustration, friend. It's just an illustration.

Beginning in verse 11, I apologize, of 1 Corinthians 3, a wonderful passage that has nothing to do kind of with what we're talking about but yet is absolutely related to it. It says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Now let me go ahead and read into that. That means our faith, our eternity is based on Jesus, not baptism. It's based on Jesus, not a church affiliation. So it's based on Jesus.

Verse 12, "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," we'll get to that in just a minute, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." This is a passage of scripture that throughout the years we have said relates to an event known as the judgment seat of Christ.

Now just for the sake of clarification I'm going to use acronyms up here. The judgment seat of Christ is very distinct than what we often call the great white throne judgment. The judgment seat of Christ is found in 1 Corinthians 3, it's found in 2 Corinthians 5, it's found in Romans 14. This passage of the great white throne judgment is found in Revelation 20:10-15 and collective phrases about judgment. What are the differences here? The great white throne judgment is the judgment of the lost and the unbelieving who are condemned to a place the Bible calls technically in this passage the lake of fire for all of eternity. The judgment seat of Christ is an event where believers in Jesus Christ are held accountable for the lives they live after they are saved but, as that last phrase said in verse 15, they are saved from fire. It is not an eternal-based judgment as far as one's

location but notice what it says, that if you have the gold, silver and precious stones, you shall receive a reward, and it says if you have, no offense to the foresters in the room, if you have wood, hay and stubble, it shall be burned. I do not believe that this passage is saying that somehow wood is bad, it is just saying that there are those items which shall not suffer the judgment, and there are those that will suffer because we know that precious jewels and gold and silver are refined in the fire process, whereas wood, hay and stubble are burned up.

The significance is when you get to Revelation 1, Jesus is picturing John on the island of Patmos, do you remember what his eyes were? An eye of fire, that he is able to pierce, he is able to judge. In fact, let me give you a little heads-up those of you who will be with us on Sunday morning, there's a passage in John 5 we're going to read an study in verse 22, when we get to verse 22 this week, you have permission for a three minute nap. All of you because you were here tonight. It says all judgment is left up to Jesus whether it is this one for reward versus loss, or if it this one based on one's condemnation because they did not believe. What I think is so significant about this passage in 1 Corinthians 3 is it says that when we get saved, we are now held accountable to what we do once we are saved.

Now you asked the follow-up question: what is the gold, the silver, the precious stones? I believe these are illustrations the Lord is using as that which will not be burned versus that which will be burned. The Bible actually speaks of five places in the New Testament that are called rewards and the Bible speaks of a crown that is given. 2 Timothy 4:12, James 1, Revelation 2 talks of one, 1 Corinthians 9 speaks of one, that one day we shall receive a reward. 1 Peter 5 is the other one. And we could get into all those tonight if you want to, or basically just say when you do things God's way, you're rewarded, and when you don't, you're not.

But I want to share with you something I think is so significant to this passage. Go to Revelation 4. I know some of you are thinking, "Well, when we get to our Revelation study, when are we going to get to chapter 4?" 2019 maybe. Revelation 4. We have a picture of the throne room of God. We have a picture of the elders that are around, the angelic beings that are around the throne of God, and I want you to notice what it says beginning in verse 9 of Revelation 4. It says, "And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The reason I bring that up is this passage that talked about being rewarded, if you were to go into great detail here, you'd go to these other passages that talk about these various crowns and/or rewards that it's alluding to. We do not receive these rewards so that we can strut around the streets of heaven and say, "Look at me." We receive them so that we will have more to lay at his feet when we arrive at his throne.



I remember years and years and years ago when I was first introduced to this concept. I struggled with it. I mean, I just struggled with it and I couldn't grasp it, and finally I had a friend of mine that was working in our student ministry at the time and he pulled me aside and he said, "Jeff, what is the big struggle here?" And here was my analogy. This is what I used as a middle school student. I said if I'm walking down the streets of heaven one day and I happen to be next to Billy Graham, man, something's going to creep up in me that shouldn't: jealousy, covetousness, pride, anger, I don't know. I said I just, I don't see how that's going to work. He took me to that passage in Revelation 4 and he said, "Jeff, you understand when you're walking through the streets of gold, you and Billy Graham are both going to have nothing on your head, the question is how much did you give him upon your arrival." The rewards are not, we're not to be crown collectors, does that make sense? We're supposed to be crown givers. That's why you hear that old hymn, "Casting their crowns around the crystal sea." That comes from this passage.

So that being said, those passages like 1 Peter 5:4 that says we receive a crown when we shepherd or we teach others, or 1 Corinthians 9:27 that says that when we keep our bodies into subjection and we run our race, when it talks about in James 1 that we look forward to his Second Coming, that's vaguely specific there and when people ask me about these crowns and these rewards, here's how I summarize it, I like to keep it simple because I'm stupid, alright? Y'all know the KISS method. When you do it God's way, you have the opportunity for a reward. If you do it your way, you have the opportunity to suffer loss.

And so the thing is every one of us one day is going to stand before the Lord even as a believer in Jesus Christ. Let me tell you why this is important. Several years ago, I had the privilege of befriending a man who operated a business that I frequented on a very regular basis who was Muslim, who was Islamic, but he was very open to dialog and discussion. Every time I would come in, he wanted to talk about the difference between Christianity and Islam and, I mean, that's like telling sic 'em to a bulldog to me. I was loving life. I would go to his store just not because I needed anything other than I just wanted to talk with him, and I'll never forget one day as serious as he could be, he said, "Jeff, I'm gonna tell you why I cannot believe in your Jesus." Now we had dealt with all the aspects about the virgin birth and the physical death and the resurrection and all the theological constructs. We had hammered all that out. Here's what he said to me. He said, "Jeff, I can't believe in your Jesus because once Jesus forgives you, you Christians think you can do anything you want to do without any accountability." Isn't that how most of us live? And it was like a dagger through my heart. I took him to this passage of scripture. It blew his mind. He said, "You mean you have to stand before your Jesus one day?" I said, "Oh, I do." And he said, "What's it gonna look like?" And I said, "It's gonna look like a bonfire, is what it's going to look like." Because let's be honest with ourselves, if we were to take our day, put it on a spreadsheet, how much of our day is dedicated to the Lord and how much is dedicated to what we want, when we want, and where we want it? And it says one day we're going to be held accountable.

So this is not a passage that's against foresters, I promise you, my friend, but it is a passage about accountability and wood is used as an illustration for the things that we

spend a lot of time and energy on that are of no eternal value, and it says we shall suffer loss. Did I help at all with that question? Is the American Foresters Association going to be okay with me after this? We're okay with that one?

Yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Go back to the crowns, yes, ma'am.

[unintelligible]

Well, I don't have any clue. I was in seventh grade when I made that statement.

[unintelligible]

Sure.

[unintelligible]

Oh yeah. Okay, so here's my theory about the crowns. How many times have you heard somebody say, "Well, married to that guy, you're gonna get a front row in heaven." Y'all have heard that statement before, right? I think we're going to be shocked at who has the most crowns. The people who we think are going to be loaded up may be dry as a bone because it's the reason you did it, the motivation behind why you did it. Were you seeking your own glory, your own honor? Did you do it because people expected you to do it? Did you do it because you loved Jesus? Big difference. And I think a lot of times we think we're getting "jewels and gold and silver," and all we're doing is building bigger piles of wood. No offense, okay?

Does that make sense? And so I think, and by the way, let me tell a little story tonight just because I can and it's fun. By the way, I don't know if you've noticed this, I've got my happy shoes on tonight. These are my happy shoes. You cannot be unhappy when you wear these shoes, alright? It's kind of like you can't play a sad song on a banjo, I don't think. But nonetheless, a little story about years and years and years ago, the first church I pastored. Some of you may have heard this story. If you have, forgive me, but it's great. I was actually preaching a sermon from Matthew 23 and it's the passage where the Pharisees are bragging about their righteousness, "We are so good. We don't just tithe, we actually tithe three different times." And bragging and Jesus came and he said, "Woe unto you," and he called them vipers and serpents. He said that their converts were twice the children of hell than they were. They're white-washed tombs. I mean, it's a pretty, woo, go get 'em kind of sermon. That's what we call hellfire brimstone preaching, alright? And I was talking about that and one of the illustrations that I gave, and I was young and somewhat naive and it's an accurate theological statement but I really didn't understand the ramifications of what I was saying. I said this statement and it's true, I said, "I think we're all going to be surprised one day when we find some preachers in hell and some

prostitutes in heaven." And I gave the illustration of the woman caught in adultery versus the Pharisees. Jesus was saying, "You may be a preacher but you're going to the lake of fire." Then there's this woman who's caught in this horrific event, he says, "Go and sin no more. Neither do I accuse you."

So I was making that comparison. Theologically sound. No problems, right, until the next weekend. One of the families in our church that happened to have a fifth grader at the time was having a sleepover birthday party. A bunch of little boys sitting around the table talking. Now a fifth grader is 10, 11 years old, and if you've been in church, particularly Sunday school, these matters of eternity and Jesus and sin, they're on your mind. So they're sitting around the table and the dad of the young boy decides to ask these kids, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" One little boy said, "I want to be a policeman." He said, "Man, that's great." One of the little boys said, "I want to be a race car driver," you know, typically little boy. "Great!" He gets to his own son, he says, "Daddy, when I grow up I want to be a prostitute." And he said, this is where it gets fun, he said, "Well, son, why do you want to be a prostitute?" And he said, "Well, according to Pastor Jeff, prostitutes go to heaven and Miss Tracy's my Sunday school teacher and I know she's a prostitute."

Yeah. That was fun, but to that point, I think oftentimes we think what we see on the outside is an accurate reflection of what's happening on the inside. Let me tell you what humanity is great at. We are fabulous at putting up facades. We are fabulous at presenting ourselves well, and a lot of times even when it comes to "Christianity," we can do a lot that others are impressed with and God says, "That's just a pile of hay and stubble." And sometimes we can look at somebody and say they hadn't done a thing for Jesus and they've got silver and gold abounding because we don't know, you know, because we don't know the heart.

Does that help with your story there? Alright. And by the way, Tracy is very familiar with that story. She knows it so don't, when you go tell on me tonight, she's gonna be, "I know the story. Don't worry." So but isn't that a great story? Out of the mouth of babes, as scripture says.

Anything before we go to Revelation? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Back to the children.

[unintelligible]

Ah, the age of accountability. That is a phrase that is not in scripture but it is a phrase that we talk about all the time, particularly on Wednesday night, and we're all very interested in this because we all have children and grandchildren and friends and neighbors and we're concerned at what point are we accountable. Now there's two ways of viewing this scripturally. One is found in the book of Deuteronomy 1:39, the other one is found in the

book of Numbers, I believe it's chapter 24, verse 14, and it is dealing with the Israelites who went into what we know as the Promised Land. Real quick story. You know what happened. The Israelites come out of Egypt. They go across the Red Sea. They begin to complain, whine, moan, gripe, yell, holler and say, "Oh, we would have been better off in Egypt." At that point, the Lord decided that those who had, as the Bible says, a lack of faith and do not believe, they would die in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy 1:39, it makes the statement that those who did not yet know the difference between good and evil were not pronounced with that statement, if that makes sense. Now later in the book of Numbers, it makes it very clear, it separates the children from the adults and it does it at age 20, which is interesting. However, I think we would all agree tonight there are 19 year olds who know the difference between good and evil, and so there's a great, this theological discourse where the children under age 20 where they separated from the adults when they were wandering, and so when that happened, nobody under 20 was even a part of the discussion. Very possible. I like to default back to Deuteronomy 1:39, those who did not yet know the difference between good and evil.

Now there's a difference between knowing good and evil and knowing right and wrong. My dogs know the difference between right and wrong because there is reward and there is punishment, okay? Now my best illustration for this, and this is one of my favorite stories as a pastor. I had a family some years ago who came to me and they said, "Oh, our little son, he is really asking good questions and we believe he's ready to be saved, be baptized. Man, we're excited. Would you talk with him?" I said, "Well, of course, I will. I'd be glad to." In the situation I was in, we didn't have three services like we do now though we had two with a break in the middle. I said, "I tell you what, after the first service, why don't we get together, just spend some time, have a great conversation." So we set a time, went to a room that was vacant on the campus. They brought in their little son and I said, "Hey, buddy." And I knew him and I said, "Just you and me or do you want mom and dad here?" He said, "Just you and me." "Great, man to man, right?" "Yeah." So mom and dad went out and I knew that's what he would say and I told them, "Stand outside the door. Hear the conversation as the parent because I don't want you out of the conversation. He'll speak more freely."

So we began to go through some of what we call the diagnostic questions, you know, and one of the questions I asked was, "What is sin?" And he said, "Well, sin is anytime you do, say, think anything you shouldn't. God doesn't like it." I said, "Great." I said, "Can you give me an example of sin?" He goes, "Stealing something is sin." "Well, why?" He went through a whole list so I'm thinking this guy, he gets it, right? To which I asked him, "Have you ever sinned?" "Nope, never." His mom peeked out the doorway and was flabbergasted. She was, "Ah!" I said, "You've never mistreated your sister?" "Nope." "You've never disobeyed your parents?" "Nope, not once." And we went through all this. I know, you're like, seriously? This was his conversation. He did not yet grasp, he knew what sin was, he had not grasped that that that he was describing was who he was.

Now here's the good part. It was probably 2-3 months later where he connected the dots. And this was a young man, growing up in a Christian home, in a great church family, and so that being said, he was exposed to definitions at an early age, he was exposed to

information at an early age, but he didn't yet grasp. And here's why I defined the difference between good and evil. He didn't realize that what sin is as defined by God applies to me. The statement I make is you can't get found until you know you're lost. You've got to get lost first. I knew I was lost and then he realized a few months later he was lost, and when we realize we're lost, what has happened is we've connected the dots. I'm the one who has sinned. I'm the one who has rebelled. I deserve the condemnation. I need Jesus.

When does that happen in somebody's life? That's the great question. I've said this once, I'll say it, I've known five year olds that get it, and I've known 12 year olds that don't. You know, typically, typically, not always, generally the more, and I hate to use this phrase, the more biblically based or Christian a home is not by outside actions but by true biblical faith, generally speaking the more knowledge of and implementation of scripture in a home, typically earlier in life a child will grasp what that truly means in their life because they have more exposure to it. That being said, just because you grew up in a home that is not biblically grounded doesn't mean that you get a free pass.

I had a friend of mine several years ago didn't get saved until he was about 30 years of age. Grew up, this is true, grew up in the south and had never been to church. It does happen. Grew up in the south and never been to church, got saved when he was 30 years of age. I asked him, I said, "When did you know, now that you know what you know," I said, "you may not have called it sin but how did you know that you were a sinner, that you were wrong?" And he said, "Oh, I knew that as a little kid." He said, "I knew it. I just didn't know what it was."

In the secular world we say that's when we grow a conscience, we know we have done wrong. I can't put an age on it, none of us can put an age on it. The biblical examples we have that we know that they were children and we know they were under the age of 20. The big question is in those passages were they separated from the adults so as it was everybody under 20 that was held non-accountable? Or was everybody there and it was age-based?

Does that help at all? The reason I spent so much time on this, this is a big issue and I know some of you are thinking, "But we talk about this a lot." It's that important of an issue. We need to talk about this and I've used it before and I'm going to say it again, the greatest time for those to get saved statistically is as a young child. That's when we're the most ripe for the gospel. Once we get old, we get jaded. I'm so grateful I got saved as a child because now at my age, I'm just so grateful because the life experiences I've had, the knowledge I've acquired, man, I am so grateful that even though I was sinful in the world's eyes I had a little bit of naivety and innocence to me, if that makes sense. Very grateful.

Any other child questions? Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yes, sir. Yeah.

[unintelligible]

Sure it is.

[unintelligible]

Great. For those of you that couldn't hear him because he was soft-spoken. What about those like you specifically, parents to special needs children and, by the way, there's a lot of us who have some connection too, and this is a phrase I use and I know it may sound a little bit formal, it's cognitive capacity. Here's what I love about special needs children, they're the sweetest humans on earth. They're not ugly. They're not hateful. I don't live with one. You may as a dad testify there could be moments, but at least in my exposure to, the sweetest, most gentle, loving children in all of the world. And I think that is the testimony to like the Deuteronomy passage that says they've yet to hit that point cognitively where they grasp sin.

Now you've had a lot, he may be able to define what it is because he's been a part of Bible studies in your home or at church, maybe not, I'm just saying you can get to the point where I know what it is and yet not understand it relates to me. I would say, and again I'm not a medical doctor when it comes to cognitive concepts, but in my exposure to what we would call special needs individuals, which can be both child and adult, I have no problem standing before you and everybody watching on the internet or anybody else and saying I am not concerned about the eternity of their soul because it's called the grace of God. They can't, I mean, they don't have that ability to connect the dots in relationship to sinfulness and their own. Now let's be honest, your own child, there are times when you ask to do something he does not do, and vice-versa. I mean, humans, but that's right and wrong, not good and evil. Does that make sense? There's a difference. When you cannot comprehend that you are rebelling against a God who created you, then you cannot be held accountable to. Does that make sense?

So I would say to you, brother, good. I mean, I know that's a big blanket statement. I have no problem with those, and by the way, there's a lot and when you talk about special needs individuals whether they're five years of age or 35 years of age, look in their eyes. Look in their eyes. An old football coach of mine used to say the eyes are the window to your soul. Look in their eyes and you don't see lostness. Does that make sense? You don't see lostness and so going back to the age of accountability question, I call this, we call it the age of accountability, how about this, how about the span of grace? That's maybe a better term. What's the span of grace? Until we cognitively have the capacity to address it. I would say in the situation you've addressed, that span of grace is much much much much longer, and may never be reached.

Now you say, "Well, what if it's never reached, what happens there?" Well, we go back to the famous passage in 2 Samuel where King David talks about his child that died at day seven when he says, "He shall not return to where I am, but one day I will go to where he

is." You know, contrary, and by the way, we're going to go full circle here, contrary to the concept of original sin which says that we are damned upon our birth because we're accountable to our sinful nature and how we got here, contrary to that we see the grace of God covering us until we knowingly, willingly, defiantly thumb our nose at God and say, "You may have created me and fashioned me but I reject what you've done for me through Jesus."

Now a 12 year old may not disclose it that clearly but that's what they're saying. To the situation you addressed, when you don't have the capacity to grasp that, then you're under the grace of God and you are good to go, no matter if you're seven days old or 50 something years old. You're still under that time frame of grace. Does that help out that situation? So and by the way, if you want to get a smile on your face when you're on this campus or any other campus, when you see someone who we would define as special needs, interact with them. They'll make your day. They'll absolutely make your day. The smile that is on their face, the joy that is in their smile. I'm going to tell you something, we as adults, man, we can get ugly, we can get vile, we backbite, and to have someone who just loves you because you're in their presence, it's one of the best things you'll ever experience. So let me encourage you on this campus and others, man, get around those who we have defined as special needs because that to me is the picture of the grace of God covering humanity because of a lack of cognitive capacity.

Does that help at all? Good, great, great, great question. Anybody else on this one? So much for Revelation. Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Okay, you're a little confused. Well, I'm a lot of confused. Let's work on it.

"I am too, but the thing is, okay, we've got original sin."

Yes, sir.

[unintelligible]

Yeah.

"...started out and it came on up to the infant baptism and that, what about original sin where Adam and Eve are in the garden, now..."

Yes, sir.

"...the thing is then at that point God sort of condemned flesh..."

Correct.

"Okay, at what point then, say they had children..."

Yes.

"Okay, for those children, were they born innocent and then had a propensity to sin? That's what I'm trying to come to grips with, exactly how does, and I think original sin I've been taught all my life and I'm a Southern Baptist..."

And proud of it. Good.

"You're right, when people ask me and I say I'm a Southern Baptist..."

I like the emphasis on Southern.

"So what I'm trying to say is this...."

A man wearing seersucker pants. I mean, how can I not emphasize Southern.

[unintelligible]

There you go.

[unintelligible]

You used to, what happened? Am I doing something wrong?

[unintelligible]

Okay, that's beyond the subject. Go.

"I'm talking about the propensity to sin...."

Correct.

"When a child is born is it sinful the day it's born in terms of having flesh?

Sure.

"And that's what I want to figure and I don't think you're saying that's not the case..."

No. Hopefully I'm going to bring clarity to what he's bringing up. Now I understand you have an outline on the book of Revelation in front of you. Ha, you do know that's suggestive material on Wednesday night, right?

[unintelligible]



There you go. Now I'm going to interject before I answer the question because why is it that even like tonight that we're going to keep rolling with this because the church at Laodicea in the book of Revelation, don't get me wrong, that's fascinating stuff and we want to know about it, but this is the stuff that we're struggling with and we need to address it because the whole goal of Wednesday night is to take what you're struggling with or doubting or concerned about, worried about, and hopefully get peace from what God's word says.

The question he had was, okay, he gets the whole concept of how, you know, Augustine's original sin wasn't necessarily biblical, how does that relate to the original sin being Adam and Eve, garden of Eden, and the birth of their children and the following generations and the relationship to sin in their life held accountable to etc. That being said, go back to Genesis 1, then we're going to go to Genesis 5. Genesis 1. I want you to notice something very critical and I'm going to write this on my lovely little board here. In Genesis 1 and in Genesis 5.

Okay, Genesis 1, beginning in verse 26, it says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," correct? Alright, then it says, "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea," etc. etc. Now for the purpose of this question, it says that when humanity was originally created, we were created in the image of God, in the likeness of God. Now we know that God is sinless because he is light and in him is no darkness at all. We know that Adam and Eve in their original creation, none of us are going to argue, we're sinless, correct? We were in the image of God, made after his image which produced the likeness of God. Who we were, our nature, to use secular terms, determined our nurture. In other words, our sinlessness produced a life of sinlessness.

Now go to chapter 5 of the book of Genesis and this is where it gets interesting. Now you and I both know that between chapter 1 and chapter 5 something pretty dramatic has happened, it's called the fall. We rebelled, we sinned, declarations have been made by God. Chapter 5, this is the descriptions of the generation of Adam. It says, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Interesting in Genesis 5, it begins with likeness and then goes to image. Why is that important? Because we reversed it. We were in the image of God therefore acting like God. Once sin entered, we acted like sinful man which produced a sinful creature which is why you've got to be born again, if that makes sense.

So to your point, I think what Genesis 5 is saying that because in Adam, this is 1 Corinthians 15, in Adam all die, all sin, that's where it started, okay? It's bad blood. That's how we get the phrase bad blood, we've got bad blood now, alright? When I was, I'm going to use me as an example, alright? When I was born, contrary to popular demand and what some of you may think of me, I was born bad. My first word was no. My first gesture was uh-uh, alright? That's how I came out. You say, "How do you know?" Because that's what my boys' first word was and like father, like son. So here we are.

That being said, I came out in the likeness of my parents. How many times and I'm going to pick on me tonight because self-deprecating humor is my spiritual gift, how many times at least in my home, my sons have done something, I know it's going to shock you, they shouldn't have done, and when I come to the front door, my wife will say something like, "Your son did this." Y'all know that conversation, don't you? I was like, "Baby, I thought it was our son?" She said, "No, it was your son that did that." I see fingers being pointed around the room. It's amazing how that works. I, my children, okay, have a propensity to act just like me. I have a propensity just to act like just like my dad and it goes all the way back to guess who? Adam. We act just like him, okay? And our behavior and our disposition eventually once we come to an understanding of what sin is leads to our image. We are now fallen creatures, if that makes sense.

So if we were going to explore it in more detail, I would say based on Romans 7 where the Apostle Paul says that, "In my flesh dwells no good thing," that even today standing before you, I know that according to Ephesians 2 and 1 Corinthians 6, I know that the Spirit of God dwells inside of me, not a question. I know that my soul is destined to heaven one day and not hell, but my flesh is messed up. I still have a propensity. That is why 1 Corinthians 15 says one day I'm going to get a new body because this one is too short. I need a taller version. I'm just kidding. Seersucker makes you look taller, that's why I like it, and the shoes make you happy.

Does that help at all with that question? So their children, and by the way, the story of Adam and Eve, we could take this into our own home and say it's our story as well, alright? Because of their sin, their children had a propensity, a gravity and a nature to sin that once they became cognitive of their sin are now responsible of their sin and must have it reversed. That's why it says in John 1:12 when we believe on Jesus, we can become the son of God. You see, I know and by the way, I'm a huge, this is going to sound, alright, this is going to sound un-Baptist but it's biblical, alright, because y'all know that not everything in the Bible is Baptist, not everything that's Baptist is Bible. Y'all know that, right? Just thought I'd let you know even if we're Baptists. You know, and I told you about the three Baptists, there's Baptist, Bahptists and Baaptists. You know, we're Baaptists here. We're good. I understand and I'm a proponent of the movement for life. Does that communicate in our world today? I'm a proponent of life. I believe life begins at conception. I really do. Not a question about that. We've talked about that here but I'm going to make a statement that makes some people get a little rattled, okay? When a child is born, it's not born in the image of God. It's not. It's born in the image of man. You're in the image of God when you get born again. That's a theological statement. I'm a proponent of life. Does that make sense?

Now I could expand that and say, well, the whole idea of a body and a soul and a spirit, three in one, I could get and we could take that argument and we could split hairs all night long. What I'm trying to say is when I say that a child is not born in the image of God, I'm saying a child is not born sinless, a child is not born saved, a child is not born with a propensity for sinlessness, goodness, righteousness, sanctification. We're born bad which is why we have to be born again. But I want to make it clear again, I'm a huge proponent of life but I think sometimes we use grand theological terms to describe things

that aren't theologically true and as I jokingly say, if you disagree with me, volunteer in the preschool this week and you'll have proof of what I mean.

Anybody else on this fun issue? We have exhausted it hopefully.

Okay, now tonight we're going to do the church at Laodicea in three minutes. They started, they were bad, they ended. Okay, that's the church at Laodicea. No, I'm going to give you an assignment for next week because we're going to do Laodicea next week, I promise. Here's your assignment: between now and then find some time to go and read Revelation 3 beginning in verse 14 through 22 and here's your assignment, read about the church of Laodicea, some of you are note-takers, some of you are just middle note-takers, I want you to either write down physically or to at least think about what are the commonalities, what are the parallels, what are the eerie comparisons to the church of Laodicea to the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Oh yeah. So that being said, when we get together next week, we will discuss the church at Laodicea. We need to discuss the church because we're going to find out the church at Laodicea may not just be a 2,000 year old story, it may be our story that we need to learn from.

So let's pray and we'll be dismissed.

*Lord, as we leave this place, God, I cannot thank you enough that in our questions, in our struggles, in our doubts, our fears whether voiced or unvoiced, God, I cannot thank you enough that you've given us answers and you've given us hope and you've given us assurance, more importantly that we come because you've given us grace, that which we did not deserve. God, we don't deserve to be forgiven, we don't deserve to be saved, we don't deserve to be called your children, we don't deserve to be protected by your hand and yet you're willing to do it anyway and we come to say thank you that you loved us that much. As we depart from this place, God, I do pray though that we would live in that grace, walk in that grace, we would breathe in that grace so that we would be instruments of your grace wherever our feet take us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

God bless. See you next week where we will talk about Laodicea.