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Moderator. As normal, we have two people, Sheldon and Regan back there with microphones ready for you, so if you have any questions for Phil and Mike, you guys can start finding your way back there and we'll just kind of go back and forth in the back. I did receive just a couple of emails, not too many, and both of them not real light subjects so we kind of jump right in until we get other people back there, but we'll try to hit both of these along the way.

So here's the first question that somebody emailed in this week and they said: Jesus knew the hearts and minds of those around him, he also was well-aware of his mission here on earth, why did he then cry out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" I understand why God had to turn his back on Jesus on the cross but wouldn't Jesus have understood this as well?

Speaker. Do you want to take that one?

Speaker. Sure.

Mike Riccardi. Yeah, I mean, I have a number of thoughts that spring to my mind. The first one, I think the easiest most simple answer is, you know, that's a quote from Psalm 22 and so one of the things that Jesus is doing is he's even in this moment where he undergoes the wrath of his Father in the place of his people, he is quoting Scripture and calling people's minds to the fact that he is the fulfillment of all Old Testament messianic prophecy, that he is the Messiah who was to be cut off, as Daniel 9 says, and have nothing. You know, so first of all, he's, you know, quoting Scripture but the other thought is that, yeah, Jesus was omniscient, he was God and in virtue of his Godhood, he was omniscient, but in virtue of his manhood, he did not know the day or the hour or the day of his return, right, Mark 13:32. So sometimes Scripture predicates things of Jesus that pertain to his Godhood and sometimes they predicate things that pertain to his manhood.

Now even as God, Jesus did not know the experience of suffering as a man or experiencing the wrath of God, right? From all eternity, Jesus only knew, the Son only knew his Father's delight and approval and there, well, and when he was on earth, the Scripture says plenty of things that were "new" to Jesus. He increased in wisdom and in favor with God and men, Luke 2:52. How is it possible for one who is perfectly wise to increase in wisdom? Well, according to his human nature. Hebrews 5 talks about how

Jesus learned obedience and was made perfect through sufferings. He learned obedience from the things that he suffered and so how is it that the one who is perfectly always conforming to the will of God who himself is, you know, the possessor of the will of God, how is he learning obedience? Well, learning it as a man, learning it as one who is, there's experiences breaking into his consciousness that as a human, a fully human person, a person with a fully human nature, he never had to experience before.

So in that moment of forsakenness, in that moment of, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" what's happening to Jesus is he is experiencing for the first time his Father's displeasure and displeasure in a way that really can't be captured in words, right? I mean, it's all of the bitterness of hell itself wrapped up into three hours, and in a special way into one moment where, I mean, there's just no cry like that, there's no cry like the cry of dereliction and I think that there is bewilderment, I think that there is, "What in the world is this?" you know, as the human nature of Christ, you know, allows him to experience that forsakenness. And I think, again, his reflex action to that kind of bewilderment is to quote Scripture. All he could do is to recall the words of prophecy that remind him, I think, of the fact that he's supposed to be there, right? That this is the Scripture's will, God's will for him to be there. But in that moment of just where all the bitterness of hell, all the torments of suffering, all the weeping and gnashing of teeth that we would have rightly experienced, he is experiencing in some ineffable, indescribable way and his holy soul retreats to Scripture to say, one, "I'm gonna call upon, I'm gonna use the words that the Psalmist David used when he was feeling forsaken," and two, "I'm going to remind myself and everybody around me that this is the will of God according to the Scriptures."

Phil Johnson. Yeah, good. You know, one other thing I would say is this, Scripture doesn't explain to us how the omniscient knowledge of Jesus as God was ever communicated to his human mind. It's obvious, I think, that a truly human mind could not possibly contain omniscient knowledge but Jesus had access to all of that knowledge, the way, I think, the Baptist theologian Augustus Strong said it was, he laid aside, he voluntarily laid aside the independent use of his divine prerogatives. So he didn't always make his omniscient knowledge available to his human consciousness so that when the woman touches the hem of his garment, for example, he asks, "Who touched me?" And it's not like this is an exercise in rhetorical questions, he's asking because he wants to know and Scripture clearly says Jesus himself said he didn't know the day or the hour of his return.

So there were obviously limitations on his human knowledge. It doesn't mean that he gave up his omniscience, it just means he didn't always use it. He lived a truly human life and that means that as a child, he grew and was in favor with God, I mean. He didn't cheat in doing that, you know. If he had used his omniscience to ace his trigonometry exam, it wouldn't have been a truly human life. So he learned the way we learn as a human but all of that omniscience was nevertheless there. It's a mysterious reality to explain how the divinity of Christ and the humanity can possibly be melded together in one person but Scripture makes it clear that that's the way it was and I think when he says that saying on the cross, he's not, well, he's quoting like Mike said, quoting Psalm 22

which is full of references to the cross. It's clear from the context of Scripture that he's not taken off-guard by this, he's not like surprised, "Why is this happening?" He knew and that's what the agony in the garden was ahead of time, he knew what he would suffer and he knew why he would be suffering. So the question why in that case is simply quote from the Psalm. That in that case, I don't think that's Jesus asking for an answer to a question he doesn't know the answer to, he's just quoting the Psalm.

Moderator. That's a long answer to a really good question, but... Good. Well, let's go to the back then and, Sheldon, on your microphone there.

Speaker. Good morning. My name is Billy and in Romans 11, I've heard that it's one of the most difficult chapters, the most studied chapters in the difficult to understand, we come to verse 32, "For God has shut up all in disobedience so that he may show mercy to all." On the face of it on a human level, it just doesn't make any sense. Why would he make me disobedient to make, to show mercy on me?

Speaker. Yeah, it doesn't say he made them disobedience, it says he shut them up in disobedience. They are disobedient by their own will and it's a judgment against their disobedience to basically seal their disobedience so and that's true anytime any of us sins. We can't blame the sovereignty of God for our sin. If the Lord took his sovereign grace away from us, we'd be worse sinners than we are. He doesn't cause people to sin, he doesn't, when it says he'll send a strong delusion that they believe the lie, it doesn't mean that God himself promotes the lie, it's simply that as an active judgment, he seals the sinfulness of a sinner's heart as it is.

The truth is, that's what we all deserve. When the angels fell, none of them were redeemed. They were instantly damned and that could have and would have been perfectly just if that happened to humanity as well, if when we sinned God just summarily judged us. He made redemption a reality because he wanted to save a remnant of the human race. He doesn't cause the others to sin, he simply passes over them with his saving intention.

I did a message on this from Romans 9, in fact, before you get to Romans 11, Romans 9 sort of deals with this issue and it's talking about the potter and the clay and all that. One of the points I made in that message is that clay in and of itself is an inner, it's just basically mud, right? And if you leave it to itself, it's gonna harden into a lump that's useless for anything. The Potter, the divine Potter, takes of that clay and instead of letting it harden into a useless lump, he makes vessels some for honor and some for dishonor. And the example that Paul uses in Romans 9 is Pharaoh who the Lord hardened his heart, doesn't mean that God infused a sinful intention into Pharaoh. He had that sinful intention by his own will, the Lord simply sealed him as a matter of judgment and used him, then, as a vessel of dishonor to further God's purpose. So if you look at what God did to Pharaoh and for him, you can't complain that God was unfair to Pharaoh. He was the most powerful man in the world. He had every possible advantage. He had a prophet of God telling him the truth and he refused to obey it and so God judged him for that.

The point in Romans 9 and same here in Romans 11, isn't that God made him worse than he would have been but that God used this evil thing for a good purpose and you see the purpose words in Romans 9 and in talking about Pharaoh, Romans 9:17, for the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." So then he has mercy on whom he desires and he hardens whom he desires. Then he gets into that question, "Well, how does he still find fault because if nobody can resist his will, how can he hold anybody responsible or accountable?" And that's when Paul says, "Well, who are you, O man, to talk back to God? The thing molded won't say to the molder, 'Why do you make me like this? Doesn't the potter have the right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use and then here's another bunch of key purpose words, "What if God willing to demonstrate his wrath and make his power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? What if he did so to make know the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy which he prepared beforehand for glory?"

So I'm going to raise you up to demonstrate my power. I'm going to proclaim my name. I'm gonna demonstrate my wrath. I'm gonna make my power known. I'm gonna make known the riches of my glory on the vessels of mercy. So God's purpose in hardening to the degree that he does and then showing mercy to the degree that he does, is to demonstrate his character as a merciful, powerful, wrathful, glorious God and Scripture expects that we understand the demonstration of God's character, the revelation of God's character as a sufficient good, a sufficient reason, a morally sufficient reason for ordaining evil, and even the destruction of sinners. If God's character is displayed and put on display and seen to be what it is for who he is, then that's the greatest good in the world and whatever means have to be taken in order to have that done, could not be imputed as blameworthy to a God who does the greatest good to everybody by showing himself to them.

So really the controlling thought is what is my greatest benefit ever? It's to see and know and enjoy God and so therefore what is God's greatest act of love? It's to put himself on display and to be able to make himself able to be seen and understood. And what Romans 11:32 says, Romans 9:22 says, Romans 9:17 says, is the hardening of sinners and the saving of sinners is what puts his glory on display. The ultimate answer to your question is he does that to show himself off, to make his character known to those of us who know him, and that is the greatest act of love possible.

Speaker. Good morning. I'd like to find out if I'm actually dividing the word truthfully or if I'm thinking correctly about this in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul talks about the vision of paradise and then Acts 9:9 the Bible says that he was without sight for three days, and I was wondering did he need that kind of convincing from the Lord while he was blind and then in verse 12, even though he didn't claim that it was him, was that the kind of revelation he got when he was blind for those three days when he met Christ?

Mike. I think the two visions are separate. I think that Acts 9 is not 2 Corinthians 12 and there are a lot of reasons for that that I could point you to read in a commentary, but I do

think that the two things are separate because the timing, you know, he names the timing in chapter 12, fourteen years ago and so on. So for one thing, they're not the same event.

Well, the reason that he says, you know, "I know a man," is that what you're asking, why is he sort of speaking in the third person in 2 Corinthians 12? It's because he's in the middle of a discourse in 2 Corinthians called the fool's speech where he is adopting the sort of the rhetoric and the MO of these false apostles who've infiltrated Corinth and are wooing the Corinthians away and they are boastful triumphalists and Paul is, you know, he's saying, "Look, if you're attracted to boastful triumphalist fools, well then, I'll go ahead and be a boastful triumphalist fool," and he starts talking about all these terrible things that have happened to him to make fun of boasting and one of the things that he's gonna do in 30, 11:30 to 12:10 is he's gonna give you two illustrations of his weakness and one of them is when he got let down in that basket in 30-33, and then one is the thorn in the flesh. But to set up the thorn in the flesh, why is Paul getting a thorn, it's because of the surpassing greatness of these revelations.

So in the middle of these two illustrations of weakness is a set-up of context of why I got the second weakness, and he's so disgusted with boasting and referring to himself that he distances himself from the vision because he can't stand talking like he's boasting in his own revelations. So it really is him, it's just that it's the kind of thing where he's like, "Yeah, I know a guy," because this is just so.... I mean, and you see that in the context, 11:30, "If I have to boast, I'll boast of what pertains to my weaknesses. Boasting is necessary," verse 1, "though it is not profitable but I'll go on to visions and revelations of the Lord." Verse 5, "You know, on behalf of such a man I'll boast, but on my own behalf I won't boast except in regard to my weaknesses for if I do wish to boast, I won't be foolish because I'll be speaking the truth but I refrain so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me." So he's trying to show that the foolishness of boasting, "I can't stand it," and it eventually turns his stomach to the point where he's gotta fabricate a person to talk about his own experience.

Speaker. And I've heard a really powerful preacher preach all the way through 2 Corinthians really recently, so I would tell you to go to the Grace Life Pulpit and look up Mike's messages on that exact verse and those verses in there.

Mike. I just preached it to you.

Speaker. Yup, we spent several weeks...

Mike. No, just now.

Speaker. Well, yeah, yeah...

Mike. That's it, you're don.

Speaker. Well, you get more than that.

Moderator. So good. Yes, in the back.

Speaker. We just finished in a men's fellowship, MacArthur's study book on Kings, Psalms and Ecclesiastes, and one of the main subjects was gaining wisdom and being able to discern and we talked about some of the references that we also used, and one man brought up Rick Warren's "A Purpose Driven Life," and other men kind of had some concerns about it. So I looked at John Piper's interview with him and he cautioned Rick to be, he explains that Rick tries to be theologically sound without using doctrinal or theological terms in his public ministry and there were a couple others that were kind of negative. It was balanced by Francis Chan who stood in for Rick Warren during his sabbatical and warned against being critical of true Christian leadership. My concern is what is your comment on that and my real concern is, how do I as an individual not deal with negative energies in shooting the messenger but also using this in a more positive way to learn the lesson of gaining wisdom?

Phil. I'm not sure I understand the question. You're saying how can you deal with the heresy without criticizing the heretic? Is that the question?

Speaker. That's a great, I mean, like that's just, that's Phil Johnson, right? I mean, that's what you want. No, so the reality is...

Speaker. That explains half of his question as to what you think of Rick Warren.

Mike. So the reality is both Rick Warren and Francis Chan are not safe guys. They're not helpful shepherds. In the case of Rick Warren, I mean, I think it's you border on asking whether he's a genuine teacher who's mistaken or a false teacher who's leading people astray. I think that that question is very much in play. With Francis Chan, the trajectory has only gotten even more and more troubling. As time has gone by, his comments on the Catholic Church, the pope, you know, sort of commending people who deny the Gospel, and the pastor's responsibility along with the Christian minister's responsibility, you know, which is to say the responsibility of all Christian people who are serving their brethren, is to protect the flock, is to warn against false teaching.

And I mean, the nonsense in "The Purpose Driven Life," is false teaching to be warned against and so the reality is you do have to say, "You know what? This is black and this is white, this is false and this is true." How to not get, you know, sort of stuck in the mire as you're rolling around with the pig, you know, I think....

Phil. Thanks.

Mike. I wasn't talking about you.

Phil. Oh, no, I know.

Mike. Just kidding.

Phil. This is the first Q&A they've let me do since Shepherd's Conference.

Mike. I think you have to just be, keep a close watch on your heart and make sure that you're not getting into this rah-rah session of let's beat up the pinata sort of a thing.

Phil. But let me give you some help with that. John MacArthur has a whole book on pragmatism and that is fundamentally the problem with both Rich Warren and Francis Chan, they've adopted pragmatic philosophy of ministry that tends to drag a person away from Scripture and sound doctrine. So John's book on that, John MacArthur's book is called "Ashamed of the Gospel." If you'll see me afterwards, give me your address, I'll send you a copy of the book because it's really worth reading, and he doesn't like single out Rick Warren or name anybody by name, he just analyzes what's wrong with this philosophy of ministry and I think it's one of John's best books ever.

There are times, though, when if you really want to be clear in debunking a false teaching or a bad doctrine, you have to name the name of the person who's doing it. You see examples of that in Scripture. Paul frequently names names of people who's teaching he's concerned about or who's behavior he doesn't approve.

Mike. Hymenaeus, Philemon...

Speaker. That helps me because some men have said, "Don't shoot the mule or the messenger, but it's the message, that's the most important." But now you put it into proper perspective.

Phil. Yeah, and that's a common, that's a common attitude today, you know, "Well, you're shooting the messenger, or why do you have to name names?" or whatever. I think that's a post-modern scruple that's not very helpful, frankly. People in our great-grandparents' generation wouldn't have likely reacted that way to very clear critiques, but these days one of the things post-modernism has done and the drift of human discourse over the past century really, is condition us to prefer things muddy rather than clear, you know, indistinct and non-specific rather than, you know, really taking on an issue, and it hasn't been helpful either in secular politics or even, it's even worse in the realm of theology.

Now there are people who abuse it and people who are full-time critics who do nothing but, you know, attack people by name and all that, and that's deplorable as well but there's some middle ground there somewhere where when you've got a really serious error, you have to, it's more helpful to quote the person who's teaching this, document the source and then unravel it and that entails naming the names of people we disagree with sometimes.

Mike. And, I mean, in terms of just the biblical example, I mean, we don't, again we don't want to walk around just flaming and just yelling at everybody and all that, but Scripture could get to a pretty severe form of language with people, with the messengers and not just with their message. So 2 Peter 2 is a classic place for that and here's some of what you hear. "But these," 2 Peter 2:12, "like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of

instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes reveling in their deceptions as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children forsaking the right way, they've gone astray having followed the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness. These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm for whom the black darkness has been reserved, for speaking out arrogant words of vanity, they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption."

And so, I mean, that's just some of the most severe language in 2 Peter 2 that you'll have. Paul says in Philippians 3, beware of the dogs. Beware of the evil workers. Beware of the false circumcision, the mutilation, the mutilators, which is a play on words for circumcision. He's saying these people claim to be the ones who are servants of righteousness talking about the necessity of circumcision but nothing but mutilators. So there's a time in the life especially of the shepherd where it's important to use the voice to scare the wolves as well as that voice to comfort the sheep.

Phil. And maybe could I throw in too, I mean, if it's a men's study from guys outside of Grace Church, I mean, I've been part of those before and, I mean, sometimes it's just ignorance, right? I mean, that was me even coming to Grace Church, hearing, you know, solid biblical teaching, you know, they're thrown these things saying, "This is good. This is right. This is the best thing out there." They don't know any better so, I mean, what I've done a lot of times is saying, "Hey, you got to choose this book, can I choose the next book?" You know? And try to expose them to really solid biblical teaching and just seeing God work in their hearts and even exposing the error of what they've been studying because now you've exposed them to, you know, true biblical teaching.

Speaker. I want to thank you probably on behalf of all of us for your service and the time that you put in. We realize that the time you do put in is much more than your time before us and I want to thank you for that.

Speaker. It's our pleasure. Thank you.

Moderator. Harry, do you have a question?

Speaker. Yes, good morning. You know, I was gonna say the same thing, I wanted to thank you. But my question is when between Jesus' earthly body and the glorified body, he was walking with those two men and they didn't recognize him, what's the difference between the body he had here and the one that he has now sitting at the right hand of God in heaven?

Phil. Yeah, Scripture isn't real definitive about that except there's one place in Scripture where the glorified Christ is described in physical terms and that's in the book of

Revelation when John sees him. He describes him as his hair is white as wool, and he has a voice like thunder, and all of that. It's clearly the same body because he was able to show the wounds to Thomas, and yet it's glorified so it's changed in certain ways. You know, his hair white as snow or white as wool, I forget what it says, but white hair isn't likely one of the characteristics that Jesus had prior to his resurrection. So I don't know what all features looked different, if he looked older or if he looked younger, I don't know because it just doesn't say, but it's understandable that he would be unrecognizable. People who knew me 20 years ago seeing me today don't recognize me.

Mike. That's the reverse side of glorification.

Phil. Yeah. Plus I've packed on a few pounds.

Mike. Yeah, I would say that it's, I mean, it's certainly the kind of body that can eat, right, because in Luke 24, they think they're seeing a spirit and he says, "Hey, got some fish? Watch, I'll eat some fish and show you that I'm not a spirit. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bones like I have." So it's a physical body, it's free from the presence of sin yet it's still able to perform, you know, the function of eating and digesting, I'd imagine.

So some people would say, you know, it's the glorified body that makes him unrecognizable to Mary and I suppose that could be, but it could also be that he intentionally sovereignly executed her not being able to see him or recognize him for, you know, the purpose of being longer with her and even the two men on the road to Emmaus, it could have been that he hid himself from them, but by the time, you know, he's there with Thomas, you know, "My Lord and my God, Rabbi, this is you." You know what I mean? "Here you are."

So they do recognize him at some point but obviously, yeah, the body in 1 Corinthians 15 is sown natural, it's raised spiritual, it's sown perishable, it's raised imperishable, it's sown with dishonor, it's raised in glory, right? And so what does it mean for a body to be raised in glory? What does it mean for anything to be glorious? It is mysterious. There's beauty there. Who knows what the kind of age is it gonna be. You know, what will we look like. Do we look like when we died? Do we look like when we were younger, you know, when we were the most vital? What will that be we don't quite know but there is a beauty to it, there is a glory to it that it makes it desirable and attractive, I think.

Moderator. Good. Let me go to another one that I got via email this week. This one says: sadly our daughter and her family have become Orthodox Christians, and it says it's similar to Greek Orthodox but their church is Antiochian Orthodox and she said, our question is in their church since tradition is elevated to the level of Scripture and at times has higher priority, would an Orthodox priest qualify as a false teacher? And then we were talking this morning even, then how should they approach their daughter and son-in-law, you know, about these matters?

Phil. I would say an Orthodox priest would qualify as a false teacher because generally going to reject the heart of the Gospel, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It's a

mystical and works-based idea of salvation. So the question is how now do they approach the daughter and son? I would say like you would any daughter or son who joined a cult or a false religion or whatever, love them and continue to press the claims of the Gospel with them.

Moderator. And for those who might not be that, you know, familiar with it, can you guys shed a little light on what it is?

Phil. Yeah, Orthodoxy is very hard to describe because they don't have doctrinal statements, they have traditions. And there are different kinds of Orthodoxy as well. One of the reasons Eastern Orthodoxy is so popular among evangelicals or let's say unduly popular, it's not like it's really popular but it has amazed me over the years the number of evangelicals here and there, scattered evangelicals that move into Eastern Orthodoxy including Hank Hanegraaff who, you know, supposedly was the Bible Answer Man but didn't have answers to some of the most basic questions about the Gospel so he joins Eastern Orthodoxy?

I don't know and I don't get it but the trend goes back to the early 70s when a man named Peter Gillquist became Eastern Orthodox. He was a leader among Campus Crusade. He was a book editor like me, and he converted to Orthodoxy but he said Orthodox forms and style but the evangelical Gospel so he called it Evangelical Orthodoxy or something like that. So for years they ran this little denomination that looked Eastern Orthodox but supposedly still had some commitment to the Gospel and then after, I don't know, 10 or 15 years, they just blended into, they formally joined Eastern Orthodoxy and abandoned any commitment they had to the doctrine of justification by faith. To me, that's the heart of the problem with Eastern Orthodoxy, it abandons the Gospel in favor of mystical practices and they venerate icons, pictures. Different from Roman Catholicism because Catholics will bow to statues and all that, Eastern Orthodox believe that bowing to a statue is idolatry but a flat image, that's okay.

Mike. And they kiss it. I mean, they walk up to it and kiss it.

Phil. Yeah, they venerate it in a way that you can't really say this isn't worship. It is. They worship the pictures. And if you look at, you've seen Eastern Orthodox icons, even the artwork in there is devoid of any three-dimensional depth. That's all on purpose. It's supposed to look flat and be flat because somehow they say then that's not a graven image, it's a painted image instead of being graven.

Speaker. That's what Moses meant.

Phil. Right. So there's those sorts of human traditions blended with bad interpretations of Scripture and yet I think people are attracted to it because of its antiquity. Like the Roman Catholic Church, they claim that they can go all the way back, this is the kind of religion the apostles practiced. You can tell from reading the book of Acts that's not the case. There's nothing about icons in the book of Acts.

Mike. But ultimately it's a sacramentalist view of justification, right, where it's not you're pardoned solely by virtue of on the basis of Christ's righteousness received through faith alone, but on, you know, the righteousness which is sort of infused into you by the sacrament, first by the sacrament of baptism and then by, you know, your works and your faithfulness to the Church, and it's very similar to Catholicism in that sense, and so that's why we would say, yes, it's a false religion, yes, the priest is a false teacher insofar as any Catholic priest. I mean, there are people who don't understand what the Catholic Church teaches. There are people who don't understand what the Orthodox Church teaches and they are enamored with the traditionalism and the sense of antiquity that is the opposite of the frivolity of evangelical nonsense. You know, I mean, our own movement depending on how big you want to draw the tent, you know, is awash in frivolous, you know, stupid worship with the lights low and the smoke machines and the 7-11 choruses and all of that.

Phil. But even that's just a post-modern version of why. If you go to an Eastern Orthodox Church, they don't have smoke machines, they have incense.

Mike. Yeah, right.

Phil. It's the same idea. They're trying to create an atmosphere that feels otherworldly and people are attracted to that.

Mike. Yeah, so.

Moderator. Very good. Thank you. Yes?

Speaker. Hi. I have a question. I'm studying Esther and I was thinking about Haman and how he hated the Jews, and so in Samuel in verse 15, [unintelligible] those three he tells, Samuel tells Saul, "Now go and attack Amalekites. Not only destroy all that they have, do not spare them but kill both men and women, infant and nursing child, ox, sheep, camel and donkey." And so, Haman is the lineage of Amalekite, is he not? So I'm trying to figure out how did he end up in Esther if God told Saul to kill everybody?

Phil. Yeah. Great question and that's one of the subtexts in the Old Testament that's pretty important. Usually the question is why would God tell Saul to wipe out this whole race? Well, it's because it was the Amalekites and they were supremely wicked and if you didn't wipe them out, they were gonna regenerate. The Amalekites would defeat other smaller tribes and then assimilate people and so they could grow very quickly.

The point of 1 Samuel 15 is that Saul disobeyed the Lord. He saved some of the animals and some of the people, including the king of the Amalekites, and then you have one generation later during David's reign some Amalekites came and kidnapped some of David's relatives. So somehow between that terrible defeat that they suffered at the hands of Saul, because he let a few of them live, they were able to regain strength and the size of their nation enough that they could kidnap members of the family of the king of Israel. So that was just the way with the Amalekites.

Speaker. Did Haman know about what had happened at that particular time?

Phil. I don't know. Scripture doesn't say but I would think so.

Speaker. Because he hated the Jewish people and he wanted to kill them.

Phil. Right. There was that antipathy between the Amalekites and the Jews. The Amalekites' hostility to Israel went all the way back to Moses' time. While the Israelites were in the wilderness, the Amalekites by treachery, I think, snuck up behind them. I forget the exact account but they...

Speaker. I think they attacked them in Egypt and then they took off and left and so God had, you know, displeasure with these people for what they did to his people.

Phil. Right. Yeah, the usual question is why would God tell Saul to commit what basically would be an act of genocide and the answer is the extreme wickedness of the Amalekite culture.

Moderator. Yeah. Good. Yes?

Speaker. What is meant by the term active obedience when it's attributed to Christ? And how important is this point of doctrine for us to understand?

Mike. Usually, so it's a categorization for the obedience of Christ which is the ground of our justification, right? On what basis can you be called righteous when you haven't actually done righteousness? Well, the obedience of Christ is counted to be yours. Some theologians have rejected that understanding and they speak about the obedience that's imputed is simply the obedience of Christ's death, his "passive obedience." Passive not because he was resigned but because it speaks of passion; the obedience of his suffering passion. And you know, Reformed theologians responded to those critiques by speaking that, no, it's not just the obedience of his suffering which forms the ground of our righteousness but it's the obedience of his life as a man and the fulfillment of the law that, you know, that God has required us to obey. Christ fulfilled it all the way that we were required to so that Jesus says when he's undergoing the rite of baptism in Matthew 3:15, a rite nowhere commanded in the Old Testament, a rite that was only done for people with sins to repent of, right, baptism of repentance, where he didn't have any sins to repent of, he says permitted at this time for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then in Romans 5:18-19 it talks about how so through the one man's disobedience, the many were constituted sinners, through Adam's lived out record of human unrighteousness, disobedience, many were constituted sinners, we all became sinners by virtue of the imputation of Adam's guilt to us, so also through the obedience of the one man, Jesus, the many will become righteous, the many will be constituted righteous so that it's the substance of our righteousness, the stuff of our righteousness is the lived out record of perfect human obedience by our mediator.

Phil. Right, and the second part of your question was how important is this? I think it's very important. I mean, I know people who reject the idea of the imputation of Christ's active obedience who I wouldn't classify them as, you know, rank heretics or whatever but I think it's a wrong direction to go and it detracts from the substitutionary aspect of Christ's life and death. I think the reality is that he was already beginning to act as our substitute from the very inception of his public ministry. You see that in his baptism which on the baptist, the baptist doesn't want to baptize him because this is a baptism of repentance. Jesus has nothing to repent from and Jesus says, "No, do it. Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Well, think that through. Here's Jesus who is perfectly righteous, why would he insist on undergoing an act that symbolizes repentance when he has nothing to repent for? It's because he's doing this in obedience for our sake and so the obedience he rendered to God was not just three hours on the cross, it was a lifetime of obedience and it even included the symbol of our repentance by his baptism.

So it just seems to me that that's an inescapable reality in Scripture and if you really read the Scriptures carefully, I don't see how you can bifurcate the obedience of Christ. I don't actually like the designation "active in passive obedience" because it makes it sound like there's two pieces to it, but the obedience of Christ is one thing but it's a lifelong pattern of obedience.

Mike. Yeah, and a lot of times the argument against that is to say, "Well, but in Romans 5:18," just before the verse I quoted, it says, "So then it is through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." Well, so it's the one act, it's the act of Christ's death. Well, a number of things about that. 1. There's questions as to whether that's the best translation. Throughout the rest of the passage, the word for "one" is used and it's with a genitive and so it could very well be translated, "even so through the righteousness of the one," not "through the one act of righteousness." The reason that they prefer "act" there is because the word *dikaionoma*, the *oma* ending on a noun like that can also refer to a single act, a single point, but it also can refer to in other places show as the idea of righteousness as a whole. In fact, in Romans 8, it says "so that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled through us." That's also the righteous requirement of the law. That's also *dikaionoma* but it doesn't mean the one act of the law, it means there's some sort of unit being considered but it's not particularly an act.

So, one, there's a translational thing but here's the main point. That was for the seminarians. Here's for the main point, well, how about the one act is his death? So let's say I'm wrong and the translation is best understood that we ought to insist on this one act. Okay, well, tell me where the one act of Christ's substitutionary death starts? Is it, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"? Is it, "It is finished"? Is it as the nails are being driven through his hands and feet? Is it as he is submitting to the lash, you know, and the crown of thorns and being spit at in the face? Is it in Gethsemane where he's sweating as great drops of blood and his soul has become troubled? Is it when he has to set his face like flint to go to Jerusalem where he'll be killed by the chief priests and the Pharisees and the scribes? You can't, you just keep backing that up and the answer where that eventually, you know, where that eventually runs into is this intra-Trinitarian counsel

before the foundation of the world where the Son, you know, agrees to be, you know, to come at the behest of his Father and the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, to be made the surety for sinners.

So his death starts the moment that he agrees to take on our flesh and in earnest and in actual earnest the moment he's conceived in the womb of Mary because his entire humanity is his priesthood where he lives in the place of his people. So even that one act of righteousness, you can't tell me where that begins and ends. That one act of righteousness winds up encompassing a lot more acts and eventually, if you want to be consistent, it's gotta go right back to the covenant of redemption.

Phil. By the way, if you asked John MacArthur that question, he'd take you to 2 Corinthians 5:21. He would see that as the definitive verse that... I mean, his paraphrase, his famous paraphrase of that text is God treated Christ as if – let me see if I can get this right – he treated Christ as if...

Mike. ...lived your life.

Phil. Yeah, lived the life. I forget. Everybody who ever was saved, he sent so that he could treat you as if you'd lived his perfect life. And if you understand the importance of the imputation of righteousness to the believer in justification, you have to ask what is that righteousness, where does it come from, and it seems to me there is every clue in Scripture that it is Christ, the righteousness Christ rendered as a man, that's why he's our substitute. This was his obedience as a man in order to redeem men.

Mike. And again, what's the, what is the unrighteousness that we're imputed consist in? You know, from Adam, right? What is it? It is that one act of disobedience of disobeying the law that God had given Adam. So if it's an actual lived out record of human disobedience that is the ground of our unrighteousness, then it's gotta be an actual lived out record of human obedience that is the ground of our righteousness and that's just precisely what Romans 5:19 says.

So, I mean, I think you reject the doctrine of the act of obedience of Christ at great peril and at, you know, there's a potential for you to undermine the Gospel. Not everybody that does it undermines the Gospel but you're playing with fire. This is the heart of the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls, the hinge on which religion turns, Calvin called the doctrine of justification. It's the cross of Christ, it's our justification. Stop playing with it. This is just what the text says.

Speaker. I don't have an opinion on that other than that.

Speaker. But let me ask you this, because, I mean, that does seem like the seminary answer. I mean, which is fine, but for us common folk, what does a misconception of that lead to? I mean, obviously there's a debate about this because something, something is going on here. We wouldn't be having this debate if there wasn't a disagreement.

Phil. Well, at the very best it leads to a truncated view of substitutionary atonement where the only substitution Christ did on my behalf was dying for me. So he gained me forgiveness for my sins. Well, forgiveness for sins may excuse you from hell but in order to be in heaven you also need a perfect righteousness. Jesus was clear about that in the Sermon on the Mount. You have to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. I can't do that. He did it on my behalf.

Mike. And if you don't have that righteousness then, where do you get it? Either you don't go to heaven and you stay in limbo, which, of course, we know isn't real, but ironically given the question we were just answering, it leads to either Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy because whose righteousness now is going to be supplied in the place? If it's not a lived out record of human righteousness that Christ imputes to me, is it mine? That's what the Catholics said. And then if it's not that, then what if it's the attribute of divine righteousness? That's another answer. Well, it's not Jesus' righteousness in virtue of his life of obedience, it's his righteousness by virtue of his, you know, divinity. Jesus is God. God is righteous, that's one of the attributes so I get Jesus' divine righteousness. Well, here's a problem with that: God is simple, okay, meaning not that he is easy to understand but that his being is not composed of parts which means all of his attributes are identical to his essence. It's not like he's got a little bit of righteousness, a little bit of wrath, a little bit of whatever. No, his love is his righteousness, is his glory, is his holiness, and they're all the essence of God. Every attribute is to be identified with the essence of God. So if I'm imputed with an attribute of divinity, I'm imputed with divinity. I'm made God and that's the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of justification, theosis, divination. Eastern Orthodox people teach that we are progressively made into divinity, we're divinized, based on an erroneous interpretation of 2 Peter 1:4 which says we are made partakers of the divine nature.

So that's exactly what happened. I mean, this was a discussion between John Calvin and a guy named Andreas Osiander in the Reformation. You read about it in Book 3 of the "Institutes." Calvin has some strong words for this guy named Osiander who is teaching this very doctrine that it's not the obedience of Christ that's imputed to us, it's his divine righteousness, and he says that's Eastern Orthodoxy, man. You're going back. You're de-forming right after the Reformation, you're de-forming the doctrine of justification to either Romanism or Eastern Orthodoxy.

Moderator. Have time for one more short question. Okay, one more short question. Charlie, can you do a short question?

Mike. That's up to us, right?

Speaker. Ah, yes, ah, from time to time in listen to KTLA, I hear just a brief statement in between and during commercials, "God loves LA." This seems to bother me because I've heard Los Angeles described as the belly of the dragon and we know that Scripture says that God is angry with the wicked every day. This just seems to me to be like a blanket statement.

Speaker. Yeah, we didn't catch the statement.

Speaker. God loves LA and reduced to a harmless platitude, big generalities like this just pertain to something scriptural just kind of seems to bother me because it just seems to be a misleading statement and I was just want to know your thoughts on that because is it something to be concerned about?

Speaker. So you're asking does God love LA? Right, is that your answer, is that your question?

Phil. It's Randy Newman that loves LA.

Speaker. Who's that?

Phil. Actually, I don't know, we might not even all answer that the same way. I would say I don't have a huge problem with that statement because Scripture says God's mercies are over all his works. The one caveat I would say is I think there are a lot of people who think that's somehow the Gospel. That is not the Gospel message. It's just as true that God is angry with the wicked every day and Los Angeles of all places, needs to hear that. But I wouldn't necessarily consign to that remark, "God loves LA," to the rank of heretical because we're commanded to love our enemies, right, in Matthew 5, and the reason Jesus says this is so you'd be like your Father who's in heaven who sends, you know, the rain and the sunshine to the just and the unjust. So he shows his goodness to LA all the time and my only problem with that statement is I think most people in the world assume, they love themselves, they assume God must love them too, right? And so that's not really the end of the story.

Mike. Yeah. Let me give you just a couple of quick categories for this. Theologians talk about God's love according to three categories. One is the love of benevolence, the wanting good for somebody. The love of beneficence, the doing good to somebody. And the love of complacency which is, you know, taking delight in something for its own sake. So the love of benevolence, surely God wants good for his creatures. There's expressions about God in Scripture that he desires, you know, does not desire the death of the wicked, he wants them to turn from their wicked way and live. There is obviously Phil was talking about there is the love of beneficence, the sun and the rain come on the just and the unjust; that people have life and breath and they're enjoying the joys of life outside of hell for a little while. God does good to his enemies and so it could be said to love them. The love of complacency, though, is not universal. The love of complacency is restricted to those whom God has recreated in the likeness of his own image. God can only really delight in that which is worthy of being delightful. He's the only thing of worthy of being delighted in and it's only those in whom he retraces his own image by regenerating them that he delights in for his own sake. He only delights really in himself reflected in his image-bearers for his own sake.

So in that last sense, God does not love LA because LA as a whole is not reflective of the divine image recreated in Christ, love's righteousness. Certainly of the first two,

benevolence and beneficence, wanting well and doing good, he does love LA, but the problem is when people say that, "God loves LA," or hear that, I think they tend to understand the third of those three categories by that word "love," that God takes delight in me, that God thinks I'm okay, that God thinks I'm, he's okay with me, right, and not God is kind to give me, his enemy, a day of sunshine. And so I think that that statement can be misleading for that reason.

Moderator. We're over time.

Speaker. Very good. Well, let me pray and then we'll dismiss.

Heavenly Father, we thank you again for today. Thank you for a Sunday morning that we can come and worship you and hear your word proclaimed. Thank you, Lord, for Mike and for Phil. Thank you for the diligence that they have shown in study of your word, and Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you, God, that you have given us all the answers to life and godliness. Thank you for not leaving us here without instruction. Thank you for the love and mercy and grace that you have shown us through your word and through these men. God, we just pray that you'd go with us throughout this day and just bless the rest of it and we ask all this in your name. Amen.

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