



Q&A 2019-Part 2

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Pastor Mike Well, this morning is the one morning a year that we take out of our whole preaching schedule going verse by verse through Scripture and we just have the entire time given to Q and A, questions and answers. So, whatever question you might have about the Christian life, about the Bible, Christian doctrine, we're going to give you a chance to ask it. You don't text it in, you don't write it in, you stand up with a microphone in your hand and you just ask it. No plants, no pre-scripted questions, it's just a free for all. It's a fun time, it's a good time and hopefully it's helpful, you leave with a few things to think about and chew on, motivated to live for Christ, I hope. So I got two pastors here with microphones. Just get their attention and while one is going on on one side, you track down the mike on the other side. Let's just keep it moving. So without any further ado let's just jump right into it. If you have a question raise your hand. They'll get a microphone to you and we will go into our morning Q and A.

Question My niece just got married to a woman in Florida and I oppose that. But I want to let her know I love her. When I get the question, the only thing that I can think of to respond to that somebody help me think of, was, you know, it's not what I think, it's what God thinks. But, I don't know what else to say to her besides that...

Pastor Mike When I get the question, what question is that?

Question Do you support our marriage? And they're gay.

Pastor Mike Yeah, right, right. No, I understand all that part. Yeah. I mean, I would just say, "Hey, I've got to have the values and I've got to support the things that God has said. He's the creator, he gets to make the rules. This is a rule that you're breaking. I certainly can't approve of it. I don't agree with it." I mean, we have to have that position. There's no other position to have. And so, yeah, I mean we can be nice about it obviously, but we've got to be clear about it. And in our generation we're all going to be called on the carpet to answer the question. Do you affirm what God says about marriage? We're going to have to say, yes. I'm going to have to say, yes. This church is going to have to say, yes.

Pastor Mike But if you bend on this, which a lot of people are doing today, I mean, you can stop saying that I believe that God has revealed himself in the pages of the Word and that is God's Word that dictates our lives. So, yeah, I mean we can be kind, we can be diplomatic. But just like if someone were, you know, engaged in any other blatant and obvious infraction in Scripture and saying, "I'm not contrite about it, I'm not ashamed of it, I'm not embarrassed about it, I'm proud of it, and I'm doing it anyway." We would say, "Well that's bad. Matter of fact, you are, according to Romans Chapter 2, storing up for yourself wrath for the day of God's judgment and I want to pray for you. I want you to come to repentance." It's as simple as that. We can do it nicely but we have to not bend on what the Bible clearly teaches. There's just no way around that.



Question I was reading in Matthew just the other day about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Matthew 12:31-32 talking about how everything would be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Two questions. What exactly is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and how can we as Christians be sure that we haven't blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Mike The context of the blasphemy of the Spirit, let's start with the word blasphemy. Blaspheme, it means that you are treating as common something that is holy, to blaspheme. You could do that, I suppose, by, you know, I don't know, juggling with the showbread in the temple of the Old Testament. You're treating something common that is sacred. Well, in this case there's nothing more blasphemous than to treat the great Holy God of the universe as something common. They accused Jesus of blasphemy by making himself out to be equal with God. How can a person be equal to God? That's blasphemy. You're making God, the great transcendent God, something common like you think you're him. Blasphemy.

Pastor Mike So the context is that when Jesus came and did these miracles, he demonstrates that he is God in human form. He has all the creative powers of Genesis 1:1, calling things into existence by the word of his power with a history that it never had, with an appearance of an age it never experienced. You've got Jesus proving these things right before their very eyes. He said elsewhere, "Listen, it's like Sodom Gomorrah, it's like Tyre and Sidon, all these places that were notoriously evil, they have less culpability than you do because I came and did miracles in your street. I mean, I came into Capernaum and you saw me raise people from the dead. You watched people who were born blind be able to see." So, what you're doing now, in the context of the Pharisees and religious leaders, they were saying, "That what we've just seen, that's of Satan. You're in league with Beelzebul. You're demonic." That is taking the sacred act of God, which is the most dramatic expression of his creative power and calling it demonic. OK. So, that's the context and that's when Jesus responds that everything else can be forgiven but that's not going to be forgiven. For those guys in that context for them to take something so blatantly obvious and to say this is demonic, that's blasphemy and it's not forgivable. OK.

Pastor Mike I don't think any of us are in the context that those folks were in to watch God doing those kinds of miracles right before our eyes and then saying that's demonic and telling everybody else don't believe, it's demonic. I suppose if we had that same context, I would say maybe you should be afraid that you've committed that. The closest we've seen in the Old Testament I suppose is when Moses does all of these miracles and God uses him as the agency of doing miraculous signs and then the people come into the desert, they don't believe God's word and they say, you know, whatever. And God says, "Well you're never going to enter the Promised Land and you're going to die in the wilderness." And he says, because you didn't see these signs and attribute them properly. You, in a sense, he doesn't use the word blaspheme, but it's a blasphemous act.

Pastor Mike So, I'm saying I don't think we can in this room recreate the context for committing blasphemy as it's presented to us in the gospels. It does not mean that there's not a place where you may cross a line with God where he says I'm done. Right? We see that in the book of Hebrews. There's a lot of light that you may have and you may say I'm not interested in responding to that light. You may have so much light, like in Hebrews Chapter 6, all of these



advantages, and you completely turn away and you say, "I have no interest in that," and it may be that God says, "Fine, then you're done." It's a lot like Romans Chapter 1 and 2, speaking of homosexuality, where you have these most egregious immoral acts that are done in the hubris of mankind saying, "I not only do it, I give a hearty approval to those that do the same." And that, in that passage, you see God saying, "I gave them over, I gave them over, I gave them over."

Pastor Mike So at some point God's patience is tested with people who reject the truth. I'm just saying the kind of truth that was presented in that context was so miraculous, I don't think you and I are going to sit around and wonder if we've committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Could you go too far to where God's turning you over and saying, find then, you can have your hardness of heart? Yeah, I suppose there could be non-Christians in the room who are getting there. Especially churchgoing, you know, non-Christians, you could get there. But I think people who worry about it are showing me they're not committing it, because the people who worry about committing blasphemy of the Spirit are not the kinds of hearts that are committing blasphemy of the Spirit. Right? The Pharisees were not concerned that maybe I've gone too far in all this because they were headlong into opposing Christ and doing it vehemently. So, I don't think we've got the context to commit that sin.

Question In light of Galatians 5:22-23, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, thankfulness.

Pastor Mike You forgot gentleness, but anyway. Yeah, but you're a gentle person so OK.

Question In light of that how are we as Christians to deal with illegal migrants and homeless people in our communities?

Pastor Mike Well, yeah. We need to be very careful in this topic because it's politically charged and I don't want to sound like a talk show host in your political lineup of podcasts. But I can tell you this. To be compassionate. Right? God would always have us be compassionate. And God is always calling us to care for people who have needs. OK. Again, I don't want to get too political here. Right? But we certainly believe in Scripture, we believe in the law, we believe in keeping the law. We recognize that there are a lot of things in Scripture that are very clear about me not transgressing the law and having repercussions if I do. And so it is that I may be a very compassionate person but if everyone in my neighborhood wanted to come and eat out of my refrigerator at some point I would say, well, wait a minute. Right? I have a door, I have a lock, I have personal property, I have a gate, you know, a fence, whatever I might have. I'm making my house sound like a fortress. This is an illustration. I guess I have some of those things.

Pastor Mike But the reality is you've got to respect the boundaries of my home. And in the country that's the big debate that goes on. Right? We have boundaries and laws in our country. You take those away. Right? You've got a real, real problem and, matter of fact, you have chaos, you have the implosion of our country. I mean we're already there almost. Right? When you've got more people, you know, taking from the governmental income, taxes that is. When you've got less than half the people paying taxes and the other half enjoying the benefits of those taxes, at some point you've got a problem. And when today, politicians sound like kids running for sixth-



grade student council saying I'm going to put chocolate syrup in all the drinking fountains and everyone's going to get a limo ride to school every morning. That's what politics sound like today. Right? It's absurd.

When you say, "Well, you know, everyone should be allowed into our country, for instance, and have the benefits of our country, I think you've got to step back and say, well wait a minute, there's a lot that goes into making sure we're adhering to the protection and the long term well-being of those here. Right? Just like in your house. I mean, I'm not going to send everyone to your house to eat tonight even though you may have some food in the cupboard. So, I would recommend this book for you. Wayne Grudem wrote a book called Politics. And I think it may be called Politics According to the Bible. I forget the subtitle, but look up Politics. It's a big fat book, but there's a section in there about personal property rights, a section about immigration and all that. He's not writing as a Republican trying to say, you know, here are some Scripture verses to back my political views. Wayne Grudem, if you know that name, he's a systematic theologian out in Arizona and he's writing as objectively as you can write. He'll be accused of being biased, but he's saying, "What does the Bible say and where do these principles lead us?" And he has to deal with the inevitable collision, at least it looks like a collision, the harmonization of compassion for people who are hurting and the protection of things that you might have. I'm all for you freely giving of your stuff to help people in need. It's the forced giving of your stuff, when you're forced by others to give your stuff for those in need. And that's the problem and Wayne, I think, deals with it well in his book, Politics. It should be in our bookstore. You can obviously buy it anywhere, but that chapter on that I think might be helpful. Better than I can do in a two-minute answer so I don't sound like Rush Limbaugh or something on stage here today.

Question I understand that the Tower of Babel is where all languages came from. I've always been curious where nationalities came from.

Pastor Mike Yeah. Well when you split people into people groups because of their language... Matter of fact, if you look at that passage, the chapter in front of it is the Table of Nations in Genesis, what is it? Genesis 10. And then you've got the Tower of Babel to explain how we got the Table of Nations. If you look at that, it's what we call in literature the recapitulation of a story in unpacking it. In Genesis 1, you have creation, the creation story, Genesis Chapter 2 we unpack that and see how we got male and female and how God did that. Same thing with the Table of Nations in Genesis. We get all these nations and ethnicities there and then it says, okay, well how did we get there? We got there with God dividing their languages up.

Pastor Mike If you get people into isolated groups because of their language, which is the explanation there in the passage of the Tower of Babel, you're going to start to emphasize clearly a set of characteristics. I hate to always pitch to books but Ken Ham's book on One Race. I think we have that in our bookstore. When you look at how quickly you can take physical characteristics and compound them in isolated people groups you can see where we have ethnicities. Because there's nothing different about human beings. I mean, you can be Asian, you can be African-American, you can be, you know, South American Hispanic, you can be Anglo European. We have all the same stuff. The question is what's the cocktail mix of that stuff, whether it's melanin in the skin, you know, whether it's fatty tissue around the eyes, all of these



things are just by degree, but there's nothing new in any ethnicity. And of course, that's the right word, in Greek "tau ethnos." We're ethnically diverse. There's no race, there's no other race, there's one race, the human race. But I think Ken's book is called One Race, One Blood or something like that. Someone might know it. Look it up, you'll find it. It'll have a chapter on how quickly the compounding of the ethnic distinctiveness in terms of how people look. All you have to do is isolate them, and that's what's happened. Whether it's an Eskimo or, you know, someone from Central America. So anyway, all one race. That's important to note.

Question I have always been curious about why Jesus was able to teach in synagogues when the Pharisees didn't want him teaching and influencing the people. So I was wondering if we know the criteria of how somebody was allowed to teach.

Pastor Mike Yeah. Well, that's a great question. The synagogue process in the inter-testamental period... Though you had rabbis, you certainly had folks who were in charge. You had the chief of the synagogue. You would have something very different than what we have today. Today you have in a church setting someone who prepares a sermon, he studies, he gets ready, he gets up, he gives his homily. That's not how the synagogue was. The synagogue was a place where you would have people stand up and come and read from the scroll and comment. There was a kind of a rotating teaching.

And it became the kind of process in the New Testament we see in First Corinthians Chapter 12 through 14 that the Corinthians had turned that practice into chaos because we didn't have a written New Testament. When you have a written Old Testament the synagogue system worked well but in the New Testament when you had people who were following Jesus but we had no texts to defer to, you just had people popping up and talking. That's why you see the chaos of the prophets in Corinth. Paul starts talking about doing everything decently and in order. Well, the great thing is when we finally got the Word of God, the New Testament written by the apostles and prophets, you had something now to defer to objectively, and then it did develop into something different than the synagogue and that people don't just come around, read the Scripture and comment on it. You know, we have pastors and teachers, which I think was the intention according to the book of Ephesians. That was the goal in First Timothy and Second Timothy and Titus.

Pastor Mike So, I could say we could still have a synagogue structure today, which would be let's open up Romans Chapter 6 and let's read it and if you want to come up and comment on it you can comment on it. And that's what Jesus did. He would comment. Men could come to the synagogue and could teach. It didn't mean he was the pastor, it didn't mean he was asked to be a guest speaker. It's just the pattern of the synagogue and how it developed in the inter-testamental period.

Pastor Mike I think, though, the reason the church didn't do that is because of the pattern of Acts Chapter 6 and that the apostles said we're going to devote ourselves to the Word of God and to prayer. Even in today's Bible reading, if you read with us in the morning Daily Bible Reading, it talked about Paul. He says he'd given himself to the Word and he was teaching in the synagogue. Well, he could get an open mike, so to speak in the synagogue. But I love the fact he gave himself



to the Word. That was the pattern of the apostles in Acts 6, and it became the calling in First Timothy that you should have people who excel in preaching and teaching who give themselves to the Word.

Pastor Mike So I think the pattern that we ended up with was the pattern that God intended. And I think it's given to us in Scripture by directive and at least by implication that there would be a guy coming with a preparation of studying the Scripture and giving a sermon, although that was not the pattern at the time of Christ. And it wasn't the pattern in the early church, but it became the pattern and we're still doing it. Although the preaching became a lot shorter in the modern era than it was in the ancient era. Remember Paul was preaching there and Eutychus fell out of the second-story window because Paul droned on until midnight? Be grateful you live in the modern era. Not to mention the Puritans would preach for hours and hours. So, anyway, yeah, Jesus did it. He was able to teach in the synagogues because anyone could come and stand up and speak in the synagogue. It was probably very short in most cases.

Pastor Mike Talk about Nazareth, Jesus opens the scroll, he starts reading from Isaiah. He reads it and he says, "Today in your hearings this Scripture has been fulfilled," rolls it up, sits down, and they all run him out of the synagogue. So, I mean, that was a short homily that morning. But you would have a lot of people speaking. And you know, I've been to some churches, I know I'm droning on and on, speaking of Eutychus. I've been in some churches, some inner-city churches in Chicago, where that pattern, you know, there is a sort of that pattern. Now they all plan it. But in these churches I've been in the pastor will speak and then another pastor will speak and then a deacon will speak and then another deacon will speak. I mean, there'll be like six different sermons and one thing. Well, that's all planned in the sense that they all prepare for it. But in the early church that would be not planned, and it would be probably a lot shorter.

Question Thanks for this opportunity. I think your insights are great. I was studying the Old Testament and came to this understanding. I just want to run this by you. Basically, my question is how do I know me as a Gentile as part of the New Covenant from the Old Testament. If I take a look at New Testament it is filled with evidence by works of Jesus and ministry of work by Paul. But in the Old Testament God spoke through the prophets about the new Messiah coming in the future. I guess one of my question is: is there a Messiah for Jews only or for Gentiles as well. Is there any evidence in the Old Testament that we are all part of the New Covenant?

Pastor Mike Yeah, absolutely. Hidden in the very seeds of it all, when God picks Abraham... Now, think about it. God was at work. I mean, you got depictions of guys like Melchizedek, a priest and a king of the true and living God. Well, then you have Abraham, he's chosen to be the head genetically of this group of people that God would set his covenant promises on, Israel. And it speaks even in that first promise in Genesis 12 of Abraham, "through your offspring all the world will be blessed." Well that's a seed of it, developed a little bit in Chapter 15 of Genesis and one more time in Chapter 17 in Genesis. But it gets its full orb development in the prophets, particularly when they're going into captivity in 586 B.C. The prophets start speaking more and more about how God is going to let this light of the Messiah dawn on the Gentiles. And even from the land of Zebulun and beyond, you're going to have the truth of the Messiah. He's going to rule over, not just the House of David, but he's going to rule over the world.



Pastor Mike I mean, especially in Isaiah, if you start reading in Isaiah around Chapter 37, you start to see all of these kinds of universal concepts of this God who's overseeing everyone in human form. God has, you know, a name and a throne, he's a person. And that picture of a physical incarnation of a king is a king who is established over all of the people. I speak of that passage in Isaiah about the light dawning on the Gentiles. That's the passage that was quoted in Luke Chapter 1 when Jesus was born. Then, of course, all the preaching was about that. Oh yes, the gospel, Romans Chapter 1 verse 16, "it came to be the power of salvation, first to the Jew but then also to the Gentiles."

Pastor Mike So I would say everything you see in Scripture, even going back to the time of Moses, you had a receptivity of God to have Gentiles come among them. Even leaving Egypt, there were Gentiles leaving. There were the Jewish people, descendants of Abraham, and then there were the others who came with them. They were later called proselytes. They came to devote themselves to the God of Israel. Cornelius, who we just read about in our Daily Bible Reading in Acts Chapter 10, he's an Italian and he's presented to us as a God-fearer. Right? A "theophobic." He's fearing the real God of the Bible. Well then he gets brought in through Peter. Right? Peter is the one who kind of authenticates it and he's the imprimatur on it. But he brings Cornelius, an Italian, into the body of Christ.

Pastor Mike So, yes, it was predicted from the very beginning of Israel. When God picked a nation, he started with Abraham and he promised the whole world's going to be blessed through his offspring. All the prophets continue to develop that. And the whole time there is an acceptance of outsiders, though they had the court of the Gentiles in the Tabernacle and in the temple. They couldn't come into the inner part of the temple, but they were accepted to worship the living God and to bring sacrifices. And then by the time of the New Covenant, that's looked forward to in Ezekiel, it's clear you're going to have everybody who is going to benefit from this, from every ethnicity. And then I would quote Romans 1 again that, "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for ALL who believe, to the Jew first but then also to the Greek." So Jesus came, presented his messiahship, his credentials to Israel, but clearly he was presenting himself to the whole world after the rejection of the kingdom by the Jews. And yeah, it's built-in. There's a lot more you could say about that but the answer is yes, back to Genesis Chapter 12. All of these questions, by the way, we could go longer on, I hope you realize.

Question Out of First John Chapter 5 verse 18. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning." I'm sorry, verse 16. "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life -- to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that." That's my question right there. I had a discussion with a friend and he was saying the way he interprets it, the brother part is the believer, and then when later on and he doesn't mention brother and that's where he says there's a sin that leads to death. I interpret it differently. My question is so what is that sin? I see it as a sin a continual rejection. But is there really a sin that he's speaking that leads to death that we don't need to pray for a person?



Pastor Mike Yeah, that's a hard passage and it may relate to our first question of the morning. You know, that there was some understanding of those who had so rejected the light of the gospel that they certainly fell in the category of Hebrews Chapter 6. I mean, they had completely, you know, as it says later in the book of Hebrews, they had gone on deliberately sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth. Or like Peter says, it's like a dog returning to its vomit, you know, a sow wallowing in the mud. There was something in Scripture very different between falling into sin, stumbling into sin and, as the Old Testament put it, "sitting with a high hand." And apparently, it seems that there was a sense in which the community could look at guys who were complete apostates, the Judases of their community, and say these guys with a high hand, with full knowledge have rejected Christ and have powered their way out as it says earlier in the book. They'd gone out from us, Chapter 2, because they were not of us, if they were of us they would have remained with us.

Pastor Mike So this isn't the sinning brother that you have that's kind of, you know, forsaking the assembling of himself together as is the habit of some. This is someone who's an apostate. And I think that's, in my view, and I've preached on this, and you can look that up on Focal Point, FPR.org or FocalPointMinistries.com will get you there. If you look up that passage you'll find a whole hour on it, I think I gave to it. But it's a hard text. Matter of fact, I preached on that not too long ago, about three years ago I think, two and a half years ago. But I would be careful saying I know this guy fits that category. I know people who are like that, they'll say I know this guy is in that category. I'm always leery of that and yet the passage seems pretty clear, these guys should know. So I struggle and I'm torn between people who seem emphatic.

Pastor Mike I would say this: not everyone would agree on that, you know. Some people will say, "Well, yeah, he seems to have turned his back on these things in a strong, high-handed way, but maybe he hasn't. And I think some of the tender-hearted among us may be praying for people that other people would be done praying for. Yeah, that's a tough passage. But I do think it relates to our first question and not because it's the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. It could be an equivalent in the sense that they sin high-handed with full knowledge of the truth and they become what the rest of the Bible calls apostate. That's hard. Yeah, good question. Great passage.

Question The other day I'm driving down the freeway and I often turn off the radio, turn everything off and kind of in prayer and thinking about the passages of God's attributes. He's all-knowing. All love. Patient, kind. I see these attributes. Also he's wrathful as well. But in the creation of mankind, God being all knowing, one of the thoughts I go... Somebody asked me this question when I'm talking to them about Jesus, how would I answer this? This is perfect timing to ask the expert here in regards to this question. In heaven God knows that man's going to be rebellious but he creates mankind anyway, but with a judgment aspect of eternal separation from God. And however that looks, however God has put that either in eternal flames or darkness. But my thought was, a God of love, all-knowing, how would he justify that, being he's creating this to create judgment.

Pastor Mike Well, whatever we define love as we have to define it biblically if we're going to append that word to God. So just saying, "Well, if God is loving the way that I would expect him to be loving there would be no hell and no one would be suffering there." Well that's obviously not



the kind of love that God has because God is a God of love and that's a reality. And some people say, "Well, I can't believe that." Well, even if you just say, "How about you believe the things you read in the news every day?" We have a loving God right now but all that stuff's happening. So God can certainly co-exist with some bad stuff happening, there's bad stuff happening right here on Earth and God's still loving.

Pastor Mike So whatever love is it doesn't mean that he somehow guarantees and shrink wraps and bubble packs people into a place where they never experience bad things. The bad things that they experience in hell, clearly the Bible says, is no longer some of the hit and miss that we have here on Earth. It's not necessarily tied to your behavior. John Chapter 9, "What did this man do to be born blind? Was it him or his parents?" I mean, you're asking questions, if there's something bad it must be something he did. And Jesus answers in the passage that is not necessarily a correlation on Earth, but there is in judgment. In judgment they will be judged according to their deeds in an exacting way.

Pastor Mike So I know this: whatever the love of God is it does not exclude him being a just God, giving exacting punishment to those who have done wrong things. We can rest assured that God, the God of the universe, is going to do justly with all that. And we can't say, "Well, my view of love is, you know, a 13-year-old girl with butterflies and rainbows and kittens on her Instagram page. She would never want anyone to suffer. Right? She wants chocolate syrup in the drinking fountains and everyone, you know, to be having a wonderful day today. Well, I would like that too. And at heart I guess I'm a 13-year-old girl because I would love to see everyone be happy.

Pastor Mike But, God says, Romans Chapter 11, there's going to be some kind of honor in God's justice that will glorify him even in the punishment of wrongdoing, just like a judge at the Orange County courthouse. I was having dinner with one not long ago, just a hailed and acclaimed judge in Orange County. He doesn't go home to his wife and his wife say, "How could you?" Every night she says, "How could you?" Right? "How could you bring that gavel down on those people." Right? I assume there are moments of her, I hope there are lots of moments of her, adoring her husband and loving her husband and respecting her husband and all that you would expect from a loving wife even though he brought down the hammer today. "How was work today?" I don't know what that conversation must be like for a guy who's, you know, putting people away who are murderers or rapists. But yet that's what he does and she still loves him and he still loves her and all of that seems very copacetic at home. And yet he's out there being a just judge during the day.

Pastor Mike God is a just God as we just read in Psalms. He's a righteous judge who feels indignation every day. That's a God who looks at sin and says I'm not happy about it and there will be penalties for that. So reality is God, not only knew it, God designed the world in a way where people are going to not only be blessed when they don't deserve it, that's called grace and we'll celebrate that for eternity, those of us who are trusting in Christ, but God will somehow, at least in his justice, will be honored as a respectable person in the sense that he is God, God is a person, and hailed as majestic and right and righteous even though he is meting out punishment on those who deserve it.



Don't think that anyone is going to be saying, "Well, you went overboard with that." Right? God's never going to go overboard with judgment. "Well, if he was really loving he wouldn't judge anyone." Yeah, you could be loving, learn the law, go to sit behind the bench and put people away and have them punished and still be a loving person because you know something about how bad the crime was and what it deserves. The problem is we think all of our crimes are no big deal. We call lies, at least our lies, we call them white lies because they're not that bad. God is not a God who has that sliding scale. He certainly understands mitigating factors and there will be judgment that is according to mitigating factors, I'm quite sure. But there is a God that whatever loving means it doesn't mean that it's the absence of punishment in hell. And he will bring him glory. I would just reread Romans Chapters 9 through 11, which is a great section to remember that God is honored even in the judgment of sinners. That's a hard question but there you go. That's the short answer.

Question Good morning Pastor Mike. Speaking of 13-year-old girls and also...

Pastor Mike I didn't call myself one. I didn't MEAN to call myself one. I'm just saying I share the affinity of wanting everyone to have a happy day. I realized that I said I'm like a 13-year-old girl and I'm not in any way like a 13-year-old girl.

Question There's been a lot of excitement this week at our house about Revival, and we went to the Angels game, and you were chatting with our daughters and just, you know, they're really excited about a lot of things. Also my wife and I are very excited about the Q&A. So there's just been a lot of talk this week at our house about stuff. So my 11-year-old daughter asked this morning on the way, she said, "Hey, can you ask Pastor Mike a question?" OK. So, speaking of God being all-knowing. So the question that she had was: "So if God is all-knowing, how do we have free will and how do we rationalize that. You know, the difference between God being all-knowing and maybe predestination and free will. So if you could just answer that we'd love to let her know.

Pastor Mike You don't really need me for that answer do you. Yeah, I mean this is the age-old question that everybody's going to grapple with. If God is a sovereign God, how in the world are we held responsible for our decisions if somehow he's the architect of all of this. It's more than just him knowing things. And I think that's where we have to stop with the simplistic answers about sovereignty and free will, as we like to call it, or sovereignty and responsibility, that God just knows everything. If God just knows everything then really his decisions, if you want to call them that, they wouldn't be that at all, it would be just his commentating on something that's already happened in his own mind because he knows everything, it would all be subjected to and contingent on people's decisions. I don't think God's decisions are contingent on people's decisions. I think people's decisions are contingent on his decisions.

Pastor Mike Because I even think that today you could make a decision that would impact my life even if I didn't want that decision to impact my life. Right? If you came and killed me or my wife or my staff member, you would affect my life and I would have no say in that. Your will would be imposed on my reality. That happens even on earth. All I'm saying is that God has a will



that overarches everything. That's what we call sovereignty. His sovereignty rules over all. He works everything after the counsel of his own will, Ephesians Chapter 1.

Pastor Mike So, I know that it's more than just perception. What it is is God is like an architect who builds this plan and the plan as a whole, even hell itself, will in some way bring glory, goodness, gravitas, respect, majesty to God. But like an architect who makes a plan, the swinging of the hammers to put those framed walls in place are free will decisions, even though they're guided by a plan. And they'll be held responsible for those decisions or rewarded for those decisions. So, I'm always going to struggle with this. For instance, like you saying, "I rejoice in God saving me." Why would you ever say that? If you thank God for your salvation, and I hope that you do, why would you say such a thing? Well you say it because you understand intuitively that God drew you to himself and he saved you. You don't pat yourself on the back for being saved. Right? And yet, I thought you chose this. Well, you're not saying I'm so glad I chose to be a Christian. Right? You recognize God's drawing you and bringing you to a place where you have eyes to see and ears to hear and you thank him for that. That's the kind of deference that we even have in our own lives toward the fact that God is sovereign and doing good things for us.

Pastor Mike So, there's no way around the fact that you're going to have to make God bigger than you, you're going to have to make God's decisions more important than your decisions, and you're still going to have to recognize that every decision I make I'm going to be culpable and responsible for it. That's called in theology an antimony and it's not a paradox, it's not a way just to express two things that could be resolved. These are two things that are both necessarily true. I think it was Spurgeon who said, you know, "Can you reconcile for me sovereignty and free will?" And he said, I think it's attributed to him, most things are attributed to him, you know, "Why would I reconcile friends?" Right? And that's the idea. There's something in Scripture about these two truths being laid side by side, sometimes even in the same passage, and recognizing the fact that we are, you know, having to affirm both by necessity in the definition of God and the definition of who we are.

Pastor Mike Do I have free choices and free to make free decisions? Of course I do. Is God sovereign over all those decisions? Of course he is. Am I responsible? Can I be rewarded and punished for my decisions? Absolutely. Is God the architect of all things? Sure he is. Even if we reduced it to knowledge we still have the problem, as your daughter says. Even if God could look ahead to what you're going to eat for lunch tomorrow and he knows that, then is that set and are you a fatalist and you have to have that for lunch tomorrow? Right? You're stuck even with God's knowledge. If we're just going to reduce it to that, which I'm not. Then I'm saying, as I often say, "Well, why don't you just fake him out and have something different?" Well, he's already looked ahead and seen that. Even if it were just knowledge, you're stuck then as a fatalist. No, you're a free agent. You have free will, free decision making, at least in that sense, and you recognize this: this is going to be a problem to figure this out and to settle this. We're not fatalist. We don't believe in chaos. We believe in God sovereignty because it clearly makes perfect sense theologically. It's just that when we try to mesh that with my experience, I realize, wow, that's a hard thing to figure out.



Pastor Mike And a little book that may be helpful and there are a lot of books, Tiessen wrote a book on Prayer and Providence, which is another problem. "Why do I pray if everything's already figured out?" And I've recommended that book before. But a little book that all of us should read by J. I. Packard called Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God. You can get it as an audiobook, you can listen to it in the car, when you workout. But just that little book will help you with the concept of knowing. Like why would I even do evangelism if God is sovereign to draw people to himself? Well, because he uses the agency of people like us and he uses our decisions to get that done and we'll be rewarded for that. People will be held responsible if they reject the Gospel. All that's true and this little book will help you realize the motivating power in knowing God's sovereignty to make the decisions, to evangelize, to draw people to salvation, to persuade them. All of these can fit nicely together as they do in Scripture. We just need to think a little bit more about it than we generally do by simply saying God knows everything. But your daughter is bright enough to know, even if you just stick with that, you're still stuck with a problem that's very hard for us to reconcile.

Pastor Mike But it's no harder, I mean, you say, "Well, then that's why I'm not a Christian." Well, then you got a million other problems. Matter of fact, you've got more problems not being a Christian, logically, than you do being a Christian. You think of the issues of time, even if you think about the great singularity of the big bang, if you want to believe in that, and you picture it in this dark place of space where this thing was. Well, you don't even have that because there is nothing. Right? There's no time, there's no space, there's no time to start this. Right? I mean you've got a million problems. Just with the creation of time, time and space, and energy and mass and all these things, you're eventually going to say, "This is just too mind-numbing. I don't know how I'm going to ever believe any of this." Well, you have to believe something because you're here. Right? It's the problem of having something rather than nothing and it is a problem. It is a problem for the atheist, it's a problem for the evolutionists, it's the problem for the creationist, and it's a problem for the theist. What we're trying to do is to say which presupposition best fits the facts. I'm going to say that there's a personal God who is sovereign over all things, who personally creates the universe and governs it, as opposed to there's nothing, and nothing created everything, and there's nothing involved in this and this chaos. There's no purpose and all the beauty and justice and poetry or whatever we might enjoy is really nothing, it's chaotic nothingness. I'm going to stick with theism even though it's going to leave us with some charlie horses in our brain. But I would definitely read Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God by J. I. Packer. It's the easiest little book. If you want more you can go to Carson's, Don Carson's book, D.A. Carson's book called Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility. That may be for Dad, Evangelism the Sovereignty of God may be for your daughter because she's definitely old enough, I think, to handle that book.

Question So I was listening to a podcast recently by John Eldredge, the author of Wild at Heart. Basically he was talking about spiritual warfare. We know biblically that spiritual warfare is very real. Right? But they sort of got to a section that I'm not as comfortable with, probably just by lack of experience, where they were talking about being in a coffee shop having a Bible study and someone had a really bad headache. They're able actually to pray sort of out that headache and sort of found that there was spiritual warfare involved in that. So I'm wondering, you know, biblically speaking we know that the disciples early on are doing lots of different things in casting



out demons and healing. We see big churches that are founded upon this idea of healing people often and then all that kind of stuff. Where does that fit today? To what extent should we be thinking everything is spiritual or not? How should we be interacting with this spiritual world?

Pastor Mike Well, I'm not a big fan of Eldredge, just so you know. I mean, not that he doesn't teach some good things. But I can't disagree with the premise, at least biblically, that's an ailment certainly could be, as this says in Second Corinthians Chapter 12, Paul's thorn in the flesh. He called it a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me. So here he had some kind of physical ailment, a chronic ailment, and it is attributable in that passage to demonic activity. So, I mean, I can't argue with that.

Pastor Mike But you know the kind of warfare that's always focused on physical healing I do think is problematic because the physical healings that we do see in Scripture are usually based on giving credentials to those who are writing Scripture. Right? In Hebrews Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4 is a good example of this, that the miraculous signs of Peter for instance telling people take up your mat, you know, and walk, you know, silver and gold I don't have but what I have give I you, and he gets up and walks. This was so that Peter, you know, can be that apostle who goes to Cornelius' house and authenticates the salvation to the Gentiles, and can write books like First and Second Peter, and be the pastor without a Bible in his hand in the New Testament in Jerusalem, and pastor a megachurch of 5,000+ people.

Pastor Mike So these miraculous rashes in Scripture of real miracles, and by that I mean, it's not that God is not involved in space and time working within the laws he made, but I'm talking about when he suspends natural law to do something extraordinary that seems impossible. Right? The magic if you will. That is happening very rarely in Scripture and it usually centered around the giving of Scripture, for instance with Moses and Joshua and the development of the Torah, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Elijah and Elisha founding the school of the prophets and the prophets are writing the rest of the Old Testament. Then the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles. Right? And we, of course, have out of that the whole New Testament. Those three rashes of the miracles that people are wanting to recreate in their churches every Sunday, those really came in three different sections of historical periods of time that brought out of it the law, the prophets, and the New Testament, which is our Bible.

Pastor Mike So, God is not backing himself into a corner going, "Man, I looked the other way, that guy's got a headache. Let me fix that. Just pray and I'll fix it." That's not how it works because God is sovereign. Right? And he was sovereign even in bringing that demonic thorn in the flesh into Paul's life in Second Corinthians 12. He was obviously sovereign even over Satan's emissaries in Job Chapter 1 and 2 to kill Job's children. All of those were clearly sovereignly overseen by God for a purpose, because just like the New Testament says, "God's working everything together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose."

Pastor Mike So, we know that God is sovereign in that. It's not that God is backing himself in the corner saying that I didn't know your aunt would have cancer, let me get in there and fix it. You pray and I'll miraculously take those cancer cells away. I'm not saying that he wouldn't. I'm not saying that God wouldn't graciously deliver your body from illness. Paul prayed. That's what he

did. He didn't say, "Well, God's sovereign. I got a thorn in the flesh. I'm going to have to live with it. God's grace is sufficient. No, I pleaded," a very strong word, "three times that he'd take it away and he didn't." So all I'm saying as a pastor, in the New Covenant era with a Bible in my hand, I'm not expecting God to back himself in the corner and have to get himself out by doing miraculous signs and wonders every week.

Pastor Mike I recognize this though, I'm going to pray for God to heal my body, fix my problems, when I'm hurting I want to feel better, when my wife is sick, I want her to get better. All of those things I'm going to pray intuitively but I'm going to realize this: that the New Testament kinds of rectifying those things were all for a purpose and the purpose seems to be, at least by pattern and example and even principle in Hebrews 2, to authenticate people who are writing the Word of God. And that's why it's suspect to see people saying, "Come to our church and we'll do all these miracles." And then you get to their church and you realize there are all these things you can't authenticate anyway. It wasn't that way with Jesus. I already quoted John 9, a guy's blind from birth. You can know. If Stevie Wonder got brand new eyes in front of you, you'd go, wow, that's an undeniable thing. But when it's some secret little deal or something no one can authenticate or some hidden tumor or some arthritis or a headache or whatever it might be, you know, you can claim that's a miraculous sign, but signs are legible. In the Bible, in the New Testament, signs were legible. You could read them and see exactly what they were. And today the signs that are claimed are not.

Pastor Mike Anyway. Yeah, I'm not saying God doesn't intervene in time and space, he does. But not for the reasons that people think. That was a long way from spiritual warfare. But, if you want a decent book on that I might recommend C. Fred Dickason's book. Fred Dickason. It's called *Angels: Elect and Evil*. But he's got a section there on that. Or I taught at Compass Night, I did a whole thing on demon's impact and influence and effect on life, at least understanding it from Scripture's perspective. So that's available on FocalPointMinistries.com.

Question I just had a question out of First Peter 3 verses 18 through 20. It says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that you might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water." So I just was curious what your understanding of that passage is where it seems that Jesus is preaching to spirits in prison.

Pastor Mike And he certainly did, because that's what the passage says. What I think we need to understand is, let me read another passage for you. It says the same thing but it doesn't lead our brains to the place that so often our brain goes when we read that passage, because we're picturing, what was going on with that? I'll read for you Colossians Chapter 2 verse 13. "You were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh and God made you alive together with him, having forgiven all your trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands and he has set them aside nailing them to the cross." OK? Here it comes and "He disarmed the rulers and authorities," those are the two words used for the spirits and



that principalities and powers passage there in Ephesians, speaking of spiritual warfare, "and he put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

Pastor Mike So here's a picture of the victory of Christ triumphing and saying I put them to open shame. What? So the sinful spirits, the demons, now are being triumphed over and by some public declaration. OK? Now that's not as fanciful in our minds but it's the same idea, When Christ died there was a proclamation to the spirits in prison, the bad spirits who had sinned, who'd been incarcerated. Now many of them are still roaming, the Bible says, and influencing and being used by the tempter to lead us into temptation. But the idea is that here is victory on the cross and a public open shaming of those who thought they might win.

Pastor Mike Now I don't want to characterize it like C.S. Lewis, but in the Lion, Witch and The Wardrobe there is that sense, in the drama at least, and it's overstated and simplified, obviously, but, you know, the sense that we've killed Aslan the lion. "Yay, we won." No, you haven't. Right? Aslan comes back from the dead and there's shame. Right? That's the picture of Christ even at the instance of his death, that he could go and proclaim that they won. I think that's exactly what's going on in that passage. And the Apostles Creed talks about the descent into hell. Right? That's the only descent into hell the Bible would ever affirm. He descends into hell to make a proclamation, not as some of the Pentecostals teach to suffer in hell for us. He suffered in a hellish reality of absorbing our sin on the cross and when it was done he said it is finished. When he said it is finished, he had triumphed. He nailed it to the cross. He took away our transgressions. And then he went and proclaimed that in some kind of realm that we don't know about and put them to open shame. And said, "We won. Those sinners who you wanted to tempt and have them fall, go back to the Garden, you held out this fruit and you said take it, disobey God, and you thought you won something in that. I've just redeemed them." That's the picture. I think that cross-reference in Colossians 2 can help us. Is that helpful a little? Alright.