

Internship Program Study Part 2 (Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology p.15 - 25)

by Paul Washer

The importance of understanding the cultural and historical context in which we live and communicate truth effectively to people from different backgrounds.

Duration: 1:06:20

Scripture: Genesis 4:26, Job 28:28, Matthew 5:1

Topics: "Internship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context in which we live, especially for those who have a hunger to know and preach the truth. He shares an example of a young preacher from England who delivered a powerful sermon on the beatitudes, demonstrating the significance of understanding the context. The speaker also discusses the role of reason and philosophy in relation to faith in Jesus Christ and the Bible. He highlights the condescension of God and the need to know and love Him, emphasizing the importance of systematic theology based on the teachings of Scripture rather than philosophy.

Transcript

Open your books to Grudem, and I'm going to run through some things, and then we're going to get to the Scriptures. Let's go to the preface on page 15, and I'm going to go quickly, I'm just going to touch on some things that I want you to see. He says in the first paragraph, I have written for students, but also for every Christian who has a hunger to know.

I want you to understand something, that in this great reformation that's going on in our country, of people wanting, especially young guys, wanting to know the truth and preach the truth, a lot of them do not realize the cultural and historical context in which they live. What I'm saying is, a while back I was in a conference, and this young man from England got up, he's about 26 years old, and he preached one of the best sermons on the Beatitudes I have ever heard in my entire life. I was sitting on the edge of my seat, I was straining with everything I had to follow his arguments.

He sounded like Jonathan Edwards, it was a Puritan sermon if ever there was one. It was a mastery, I am not kidding you. It was absolutely unbelievable, his logic and everything, and it took everything in my being to stay up with him.

Alright, now, what do you think the truck driver who was sitting in that same church, what do you think he got out of that sermon? Absolutely nothing. Alright, if I read Puritans and study quite a bit, and I'm sitting on the edge of my seat, straining with everything I've got to follow this guy, what do you think the little old lady who just retired from Social Security, what do you think she's getting out of that sermon? Not a whole lot. And that's something that you've got to understand.

You don't preach to other Puritans. You don't even preach to other theologians. You preach to a guy who's working on a garbage truck.

All truth is necessary. All truth should be taught. But the great wrestling that you have is not just to learn truth and understand it in your context, but to communicate that same truth.

In other words, to put the cookies on the lower shelf. And that's why I respect Grudem so much here. That's what he's attempting to do.

He says, in the second paragraph, I have avoided using technical terms without first explaining them. Now there's the balance. I remember when I was a younger guy in seminary hearing guys saying stuff like this.

I'm not going to use the term regeneration because people just can't understand it. All right. That is as wrong as wrong can be.

But then on the other side, you've got guys talking about regeneration, superlapsarianism, and everything else. And the people in the pew are going like this, like, what's a superlapsarianism? Well, I think it's something like a pterodactyl. What you've got to do is use all the terms.

If it's a biblical term, if it's a historical Christian term like Trinity, use all the terms. But teach what they mean. You see? Teach what they mean.

Let me give you an example of kind of how dumb we are. Spurgeon, who we read in the seminaries, and we marvel at his brilliance, was scoffed at, laughed at, because he's so dumbed down his sermons. So that coal miners can understand it.

Now, seminary students can't understand it. What I'm trying to say is, we read Spurgeon and realize just how high, how wonderful, and everything. But the fact of the matter is, Spurgeon was laughed at and considered vulgar and common because he preached in such a common language.

Now, we need to do the same thing. Something I'm always saying, if you're preaching the prison epistles, get out of that prison and get in everybody's home or their job or wherever. I was thinking this morning as I was coming here, I listened to NPR, National Public Radio, because it really gets me riled up usually.

But they had a thing on Chicago gangs and their migration. I mean, Chicago gangs, even where we live, because we live right there on I-24, there was always them passing by drugs and everything else that would go back and forth. They're bothered how in a town right beside ours in Paducah, how much Chicago and Memphis gangs, and all these different things.

I was thinking about Ashley and them working up in Chicago. And I was thinking, we're just so superficial sometimes, such little preacher boys. And you're thinking about, I'm going to preach.

I'm going to be an expositor. Well, you need to preach and you need to be an expositor. But the gang member has to understand what they're saying.

Don't preach just to heal yourself. And don't preach just because you want to fit into some preacher boy form. You want to communicate truth.

And I don't care if you're standing on your head blowing a kazoo for all I care, as long as you're preaching the truth. You see, there's a lot of things when we say, man, like for example, an invitation, that's no good. Well, no, an invitation's good.

It doesn't bother me, invitation. Jeff and I laugh about this all the time. Invitation doesn't bother me.

It doesn't bother him. It's just the way it's given. And then what's said if someone does come forward.

You know, and it's the same way. You know, when I preached, I got my lowest grade in seminary, actually, in preaching class. And one of the reasons is during the preaching laboratory where all the boys have to dress up and preach, I walked up there in a pair of blue jeans, old tennis shoes.

One of the pockets ripped off my blue jeans with a New Testament in my back pocket. And I got up to preach. And afterwards, man, the preacher boys just tore me apart.

And then right when I'm preaching, the trustees come in. But the professor there, Dr. Faisal, he defended me. They said, why is this boy preaching like this? He said, well, because it would be stupid for him to preach any other way.

Because he preaches in inner city Dallas and Fort Worth to male prostitutes and the like. Do you want him actually standing out there in a suit? The point I'm trying to make is why I appreciate Grudem is because he's a brilliant man. He teaches a lot of truth, but he is struggling not to be respected by other people who use big words.

He is struggling to teach truth to people. And to do that, you're going to look a lot less proper and a lot more vulgar than sometimes our pride wants us to look. And when I mean vulgar, I mean common.

Now, he says in the third paragraph, I'm convinced that most Christians are able to understand the doctrinal teachings of the Bible in considerable depth. Well, I'm sure they are. I mean, it's not just a personal belief on the part of Grudem.

Remember what the pastor's been teaching on? What he taught on Sunday? They shall all be taught of God. And vice versa, they can all be taught of demons. I remember there was a time I used to tell people when there probably weren't 20 people in the whole world that knew as much about Gnosticism as I do.

I mean, in one of my most difficult classes, a patristics class and my thesis and everything else on Gnosticism and the Gnostics, it was just... I mean, gosh, I knew everything you'd never even want to know about Gnostics. And one day at our street church, a bag lady comes in pushing a cart. I'd seen her before, but I'd never had an opportunity to witness to her.

So I sit down. It's about 7.30 in the morning. Street people were coming for breakfast.

And I start talking to her. And it almost literally scared me to death. Woman had never been to... I don't think she graduated from high school.

She's half out of her mind. It was like I could have wrote my dissertation on Gnosticism by what was coming out of her mouth. Woman is a demon, isn't she? What I'm trying to say is, both the negative and

positive, you'd be surprised the wickedness and the old wickedness that has been from the very beginning since the fall of Adam.

Historical, satanic wickedness that some people are able just to regurgitate like you cannot believe. It's like they've been fought. Supernatural.

In the same way, but in a greater way. A true believer who's been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit can understand truth and understand it. And you've got to believe that, but you've got to work.

One of the best things and worst things that ever happened to me as a preacher was having to spend years and years teaching mountain people and jungle people, standing out in the middle of a field and impromptu, they'd ask a question and I'd have to answer it. Because it made me struggle. I dropped all the idea of trying to be a good expositor.

Dropped all the idea of three points and a point. Just sat out there and struggled with all my might to teach somebody what the Bible says when they asked a question. And that's something that I want you to see.

Now, also on page 15, something that's very, very important. He has a few different things here, some distinctive features in the book, and it's extremely important. He says, I believe that theology should be explicitly based on the teachings of Scripture.

You say, well, that's a no-brainer. Well, no, actually it's not. Why? I spent all my Southern Baptist Seminary training listening to theology that was not based on Scripture.

It was based more on German philosophy. You have no idea the battle that rages and how quick a person can get off from Scripture onto something else. Now, let me give you an example.

It's a really good example. In the name of fundamentalism, Bill Gothard. Is anyone familiar with that Bill Gothard printer? When Bill Gothard started years and years ago, and even today, you read some of his stuff, and it's absolutely wonderful.

I'm going to take nothing from it. Some of his stuff is just really, really good. But what's the problem? The problem is sometimes he takes Scripture and just sets it out.

It's really good. But now, it seems, a prominent thing is take this Scripture and this Scripture and from these Scriptures, draw these inferences. And it's almost like these inferences are just as inspired as the Scripture.

No. You see, so there are liberals who do not believe the Bible has to be the basis for their theology. But there are also fundamentalists, people who would die for the Bible, who really do the same thing.

That a lot of what they teach is not based on Scripture, but based on inferences. Let me give you an example of what an inference is. The Bible says God is one.

The Bible says there are three persons who are God. Okay? That's a truth. This is a truth.

Now, when I try to put them together, it's an inference. How does that work out? And I need to be really careful to distinguish between when it's the Bible saying something and when it's my conclusion. Okay? Any questions? Everyone following me? This is very important.

Also, at number two, he says, clarity in the explanation of doctrines. I do not believe God intended the study of theology to result in confusion and frustration. I wish that Grudem had told that to my seminary professor.

Because for the first, probably, month and a half, we studied the prolegomena of Karl Barth and Otto Weber. And I was convinced after that month and a half that maybe I just wasn't called to really preach or called to be a theologian. Because I didn't understand a thing any of them guys were saying.

What it all... I just didn't understand. I couldn't get it. They were doing a dialectic, a German dialectic, based on Hegel and all these different things.

And I'm going, well, I just guess theology is not my thing. But we weren't doing theology. Okay? We were doing something else.

We were taking all the German mindset that had closed every church in Germany and was trying to cram it into Scripture. And they say, man, that's horrible. Yeah, but you do the same thing.

I mean, radical discipleship passages found in Matthew that are so radical that obviously you can't mean what he's saying. You see what I'm saying? Obviously, you can't mean that. I mean, goodness gracious.

I mean, if you meant that, you'd have to change your entire life. You see what I'm saying? We'll explain things away. We really will.

Now, it says application of life. I do not believe that God intended the study of theology to be dry and boring. It should be lived, prayed, and sung.

Orthodoxy. This is a good thing to write down. Proper orthodoxy should always lead to doxology and praxis.

Some would say theology leads to doxology and praxis. Theology, theos, means God. Logos, which means word or discourse.

Theology is simply a word or discourse regarding the person of God. Doxology, from doxa in Greek, just refers to worship, a discourse on worship. And praxis, got a little Latin snuck in here, praxis refers to practice.

So theology always leads to worship and to praxis. Always. Now 17, number 4, focus on the evangelical world.

I love this. I love Grudem for what he says here. Just give him a big hug.

I don't know how ugly he is, but I love what he says. Someone should have said this, should have said it a long time ago. He says focus on the evangelical world.

I do not think that a true system of theology can be constructed from within what we may be called the liberal theological tradition. It's like, well, we need to study these people. Well, we need to know where they're coming from.

Well, we need to understand what they're saying. No, you don't. Because they're wrong.

It's like inviting a witch doctor to a medical convention. I mean, why are you going to do that? You don't need to hear what Karl Barth says. You don't.

And that would get me killed in most of the circles I came out of. Who cares what Jürgen Moltmann says about liberation theology? You don't need to eat out of a garbage can. Well, there are some things in there that are very good.

Yeah, but you've got to go through so much garbage to get to it. Just read the Sermon on the Mount. What I'm saying, just because we say, we need to realize this, just because we say, I believe the Bible, okay, that doesn't mean that we really believe the Bible or understand it or practice it.

But at least that's a good starting point. Because I'm not going to go over here and say, I'm not going to pay a dime to cross the road to listen to a guy who's sitting there. He's been a seminary professor for 25 years and he's still not sure whether the Bible is the Word of God.

And if he hasn't come to that conclusion yet, why am I going to waste my time going over there? You see what I'm saying? Just go figure. Wash cars, sell hot dogs at Venice Beach, but don't do this kind of stuff. It's just useless.

And so you've got to have these foundational points of, yeah, it's the Word of God. I have a friend of mine, Randy Lowe, who was up in Canada for years. He said something one time.

He goes, you know, Paul, because it was back before you guys would even remember all the liberalism and all the things. He goes, you know, if I've got some kid in college and he's struggling with the infallibility of God's Word and things like that, you know, I'm going to work with the kid. I'm going to help him out.

He says if it's just a continuous thing that goes on and he never can nail it down, I'm not going to waste my time. The problem is he's just unconverted. And he said how much more for someone... Like I can remember during the great kind of liberal conservative debates that went on in the SBC, you know, guys standing up and just saying, I want to share with you my journey of how I came to the conclusion that the Bible is a confident source, but I cannot use the words that you're wanting us to use such as infallibility.

It's like, I don't care about your journey. You see what I'm saying? You start off. And that's what Grudem is saying here.

And what he says, for this reason, the other writers I interact with in this book are mostly within what is today called the larger conservative evangelical tradition from the great reformers, John Calvin, Martin Luther, down to writings of evangelical scholars today. And I think that's very important. Don't waste your time.

Don't waste your time reading other things. And if a man doesn't believe the Word, just go on. Now, five, hope for progress in doctrinal unity in the church.

This is kind of neat, guys. I've very rarely heard someone talk this way. I believe that there is still much hope for the church to attain deeper and purer doctrinal understanding and to overcome old barriers, even those that have persisted for centuries.

Jesus is perfecting His church. And he quotes Ephesians 5.27 and Ephesians 4.13. And what we've got here, guys, is a very good statement. Now, our premillennialism... Now, I'm not against premillennialism at

all.

Please, don't misunderstand me. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not against it.

Premillennialism may be the most correct view of the second coming. But you can even take a good doctor, a true doctor, and get some wrong things out of it. In our premillennialism, we almost have this doomsday idea.

Everything's just getting worse all the time. Things have never been this bad. My mom one day sitting in front of the television said on her squirrel, it's just never been this bad before.

You know, I think something's going on in the government or something. There's just immorality everywhere. And I said, well, Mom, let me take you to task on that.

Roman emperor, big important guy. Stadium full of tens of thousands, say 100,000 people. Virgins tied to a cross, stripped naked in front of everyone.

The emperor puts on a leopard skin and puts the claws between his fingers. That's them fashioned in and tied. And then he goes around and bites their genitals.

Mom said, what? I said, Mom, you make those statements, the world's just getting worse. Mom, you have no idea. Do you see what I'm saying? And one thing that Grudem points out here is the hope that, hey, Christ is Lord of the church.

He can bring about a reformation. He can bring his people into a clear doctrinal understanding, greater doctrinal unity. Don't be looking all the time, guys, for everything to get worse, especially within the congregation of the believing.

Try to look at just Christ. There might be still a great revival that totally sweeps the land. And if you don't have that kind of... You know, I'm not a post-millennialist, but you know all the great modern-day missions was birthed out of post-millennialism basically.

Do you realize that? All the guys who went around the globe preaching the Gospel everywhere is because they thought the world was going to get better through the preaching of the Gospel. Now, I don't agree with post-millennialism again, but it produced more missions and evangelism and everything else than we've ever seen. So if you're pre-millennialist, that's fine.

That's fine. Just remember this. Be careful about a doomsday.

Yes, the world's going to come to an end. Yes. You don't know when.

You don't know exactly how. And God could bring 200 revivals all over the world before that time. So we need to think that, yes, there's something positive going on here.

Not everything is bad. Not everything. Now, in verse 6, He says, "...a sense of the urgent need for greater doctrinal understanding in the whole church." That is so true.

And we're seeing that today. Have you ever heard someone say, well, I don't want any of that doctrine stuff. I just want Jesus.

I don't want no theology. I just want Jesus. Well, let's look at what they're saying.

I don't want none of that doctrine stuff from the Hebrew word leka, meaning teaching. I don't want to hear anything that God wants to tell me. I just want Jesus.

I don't want any of that theology stuff. I don't want a discourse on who God is and how He works. I just want Jesus.

You see how stupid that is? I mean, it's really not that smart. And that's what we need to understand that it is extremely important. Because of theology, we are faithful to our wives.

Because of theology, we tuck our children in and lovingly pray for them and kiss them on the forehead at night. Our theology should and does affect every aspect of our life. Theology is the only way to increase in your love for God.

Most people don't understand that. Let me give you an example. You ever hear someone say, you need to love God more.

It's like, duh. They never tell you how to do it. You ever notice that? You're sitting there going, I know I need to love God more.

How? And it's like they tell you, well, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. How can you make yourself love God more? Ever thought about that? Well, there's only one way. God is an absolutely perfect being.

If you have been regenerated, the more you know about Him, the more you will love Him. Now, if you're not regenerated, the more you know about Him, the more you'll hate Him. But if you've been converted, the more you know, the more you love.

And that's how you begin to love God more. It starts off with your mind. It starts off by... I'll give you an example.

A doctor in there. Well, I invented the name anyway. The condescension of God.

The idea that God is absolutely so beautiful that it is an act of grace and humility for Him to take His eyes off of Himself to look upon anybody. You understand how magnificent, glorious God is. You have to understand His works.

What He's done, especially and foremost, in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Your love for God does what? So how do you love God? Well, you start off by knowing Him. By knowing Him.

Now, over on chapter 1, let's look at systematic theology for a moment. Systematic theology is any study that answers the question, what does the whole Bible teach us today about any given topic? Hey, thanks, Grudem. It's pretty easy to understand, isn't it? You take a topic.

What does the Bible teach about it? Systematically. Now, here's the thing. We're going to get into this in a minute.

Be very careful. There is a sense in which we need to look at how did the Old Testament see the afterlife? How did the New Testament see the afterlife? And that's a good question. It really is.

Why? Because, folks, the guys in the Old Testament didn't have as much revelation as the guys in the New Testament. You're all aware of that, right? I mean, you wouldn't know anything hardly about hell if it

wasn't for Jesus because there isn't a whole lot about it in the Old Testament. So there is the idea of progressive revelation and that we look at, well, you know, we need to understand what was the view of hell in the Old Testament.

But be very careful at the same time of these guys who do not see the Bible as a unity. Well, you know, Paul had this view and Peter had this view as though they had opposing views. Okay? The language is very subtle.

I mean, you can use the thing like Pauline theology. There's nothing wrong with that. You know, the theology of Paul with regard to the second coming.

But don't get into this thing like some people do that, well, you know, Paul saw it this way and Peter saw it this way. No, they both saw it the same way. I'll give you a perfect idea.

Paul and James. Okay? Well, you know, James has... Yeah, James just comes at it from the other side. They're talking about the same thing.

Exactly the same thing when it comes to faith and works. So be very careful about that. But he says, systematic theology is the study that answers the question, what does the whole Bible teach us today about any given topic? He says, this definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we may know what to believe about each topic.

It's very, very good. Very good. Because that's what it is.

It's the nuts and bolts of it. Now, I want us to look for just a second at something that's very important. He says, relationship to other disciplines.

First of all, historical theology. A historical study of how Christians in different periods have understood various theological topics. Extremadamente importante.

Extremely important. It is so important. And if there's a principle of Bible interpretation, you always do your theology in the context of the church.

And what does that mean? Well, let's just bring in our friend Benny Hinn for a second. So there's me standing here and there's Benny Hinn standing there. And we're talking about Hebrews 6 and the powers of the ages to come and all that.

And I interpreted it one way. I tasted of those things. I interpreted it one way.

Benny Hinn interprets it a completely different way that it means that there are a few people on the face of the earth, him being one, who have gone to heaven and actually seen these things. And I'm saying over here, no, that's not what that means. Alright? And Benny Hinn says, well, bless God, that's what my Bible says.

And I'm in Alabama now, so I say, bless God, that's what my Bible says. So we're both standing there saying, bless God, that's what my Bible says. Who's right? Well, you say, well, let's go to the grammar.

Okay. Still, it's your interpretation of the grammar. You say, well, let's go to the context.

Still, it's your interpretation of the context. So pretty much, it's a standoff. Now, not so much because grammar and context, I mean, it's just totally idiotic, which his argument is.

But at the same time, we need to ask ourselves a question. Who can we appeal to? If you say, well, I don't have to appeal to anybody. Bless God, that's what my Bible says.

No, this is what you say your Bible says. So what do you do? Well, you go back through 2,000 years of Christian history. You look at the interpretation of that passage in your own fellowship.

Say, your own denomination. Then you don't want to stop there because your own denomination isn't right all the time. So you go out into the wider view of the evangelical community.

And then you figure out, well, basically, John MacArthur says this, John Piper says this, the brethren say this. You begin to understand and then you say, yeah, but okay, that's in our cultural context and that's in our time period. What did the Christians 100 years ago say? What did Boyce say? What did Spurgeon say? What about the Puritans? What did they say? Calvin, what does he say regarding this? Luther, what happened? Augustine, did he mention anything about this in the City of God or Confessions? You see what I'm saying? You're going back through history and you're saying, what has the full community of faith believed on this subject? Now, I'm not talking about heretical popes.

I'm not talking about liberals. I'm talking about people who believe the Bible, who showed forth in their life a genuine and sincere devotion to Christ. What do they believe? Now, if they're all in agreement and you disagree with them, Benny, you're probably wrong.

Now, it's not a thing that produces an infallible foundation, but it is a great help. Do you see that? Do you understand? Because if you don't, you become a very dangerous thing that's called sectarian. Yes? I was having a conversation with a guy last week.

That was the first thing he said. It's really all about your perception. It's how you interpret it.

I didn't even know that guy knew the word interpret, literally. How do you take that with this guy on the street and you're sharing Christ with him and encapsulate that into an idea? I know Christ has to give that insight and that understanding, but is it just a matter of here's what history has taught us. Do you try to make an example of do you believe this in history? Well, the same thing's true for Scripture.

Well, what you do is you say something like this. Sir, it is philosophical, not just religious. It is a part of logic and everything.

One tiny rule which says if something is true, it's universally true. If something is true, it's always true. So sir, you said just now that it does not matter much about anything except one's perception of the thing.

Okay? Now, what you do is you take your rule, sir, that you just gave me and you apply it to every other area of life. Okay? And you start seeing that breaks down. After the first Batman movie, maybe some of you weren't even born yet, but the first Batman movie, the one that came out with Michael Keaton or whatever, you know, about 15, 20 years ago or something.

Okay? Do you know how many people did Peter Pan's off the buildings after that movie thinking they were Batman? Dressed up in like the Walmart suit, Batman thing. They had this tremendous perception, you know, maybe the Michael Jordan thing. I believe I can lie.

I don't know what happened, but I'm going to tell you something. It didn't work. Their perception was wrong.

It killed them. You know, it's almost like people think they're X-Men. I perceive that wall as Marshall.

No, it's Sheep Rock. Probably two to fours or two to sixes behind it. You know, that doesn't work in anything.

It doesn't work in history. It doesn't work in science. It most certainly does not work in mathematics.

It doesn't work in anything. You tell your teacher, well, I perceive that two plus two is actually 18. Well, you can perceive it all day long, but you're wrong.

I perceive that I can walk under the water and breathe. I mean, that's what you point out to them. Okay? And then they'll say, well, you know, religions, there's just all different, you know.

I had a young guy approach me. I was preaching in a university town and he comes up to me and he's mad. This Jewish guy, he was so mad at me and he got up and he goes, I believe the Jews are right.

I believe the Christians are right and I believe the Muslims are right. I said, really? He said, yeah. I said, that violates the law of non-contradiction, classical logic.

Something cannot be something and not be something at the same time. He goes, what are you talking about? And I said, sir, I said, here are the two logical possibilities with regard to the Muslims, the Christians, and the Jews. There's only two possibilities.

One of them is that all three are wrong. The other possibility is one of them is right and the other two are wrong. But it is a logical impossibility to say all of them are right when all of them say completely different things.

It's like C.S. Lewis used to say, I guess they just don't teach logic anymore. Do you see what I'm saying? But see, now, here's the problem. You would think with a really cool argument like that, you could just go up at a university platform and just say, hey, there's only two logical possibilities.

The problem is the whole foundation and context of thought is now being destroyed. You know, you've heard of post-modernism. So now, all the rules that have governed science, mathematics, and everything have been thrown out the door.

And that's what guys like, for example, Ravi Sakkarai, that's what he's always dealing with. And he deals with it quite well. He's in a university.

He's speaking to university people that it's not that they're illogical. They've thrown out everything that was considered foundational to truth. They've thrown it out.

You throw out all the rules, do whatever you want. You see what I'm saying? It's like, and we'll get, we need to go on, but it's like this professor wrote a paper. It was a big, big paper.

It was a post-modern paper, okay? And he's arguing about post-modernism, that there is no truth. Basically, the whole paper was, it all depends on your interpretation of something. If you interpret something a certain way, it's right.

Okay? Well, when he did his paper and published it, and everyone else started writing about his paper, someone really criticized his paper. And he got furious saying, no, that's not what I'm saying. You misinterpreted me.

Now, by doing that, what did he do? He destroyed his own argument. He destroyed... You see how, I mean, dumb. Romans 1 is true, isn't it? It's really true.

Now, just to spend a few more minutes on this, but he says historical theology is very important. Philosophical theology, this is a dangerous statement I'm going to make. I don't believe it's as important as historical theology, but it's studying theological topics largely without use of the Bible, but using the tools and methods of philosophical reasoning, and what can be known about God from observing the universe.

Automatically, you realize that can be pretty dangerous. At the same time, don't throw it out. Don't throw it out.

There's a couple of things. First of all, God is revealed in a limited degree through nature. Reason is a very, very important thing.

And in dealing in this philosophical exercise, it does a few things. First of all, if you do it in the context of a firm foundation of faith in Jesus Christ and a belief in the Bible, so the Scriptures are going to act as a guide to keep you from going off somewhere into Jupiter. But it has a way of honing the mind.

It has a way of bringing you to also understanding where people are coming from in your world. For example, questions and statements like people make. And just remember, the only one who really has to defend a position is the one who makes the declaration.

That's a really good thing for evangelism. That's why I usually listen more than anything when I'm evangelizing. The one who makes the declaration has to make the defense.

For example, if I'm reading my Bible on the plane, someone starts a conversation and says, well, you know, you can't really trust that even if that was the Word of God when it started out, you can't trust that it's changed. For real. What's your basis for that belief? What do you mean? Have you studied textual criticism? Have you, you know, your knowledge of the historical evolution of biblical archaeology? How do you interpret the Qumran discovery? And pretty much, I'll never forget preaching here during the week that I preached here a few years ago.

And this kid, pretty much grunge, you know, gothic looking guy, comes up and he goes something about... He just made a remark. I don't know what we're talking about, but he said, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, all these guys, they were deists and had nothing to do with Christianity. And man, I just got right in his face and I said, prove it.

Tell me the historical documents. Quote them. Let me have them right now.

Man, I just nailed it. And I wouldn't do that to most people, but there was just something telling me to just nail this guy. Get this close in his face and every time he makes a statement, just... And I did.

And if I hadn't been led of the Holy Spirit, I would have probably done some damage. But pretty soon, the guy just totally sat down and he goes... He made a statement and he goes, yeah, I know, I'm just saying what I've heard. And I said, yes, you're just saying what you've heard.

You know? So, well, let's get back. The philosophical theologians. Now, apologetics.

Providing a defense of the truthfulness of the Christian faith for the purpose of convincing unbelievers. You have to be very careful with that. Because even though apologetics can be useful in evangelism, apologetics can be useful.

Be very, very careful. Never forget Romans 1, verse 16. It is the gospel.

It is the power of God unto salvation. Also, please remember this. You know, people say, well, you need to be able to defend your faith.

Give ten reasons why you believe in the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I know I would have the Indians who would die a thousand deaths before they would deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And they can't give you one reason why they believe it.

So be very careful when people start telling you that for your faith to be solid, you have to have all these historical facts and logical arguments. That's not true. John Calvin said it basically the best.

A person believes that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead because God told him. Because God regenerated his heart and spoke to him. You say, well, how do you know it's God? Well, how did Abraham know it was God? When it's God, you know it's God.

It's called the self-attesting glory of God. Be very careful about apologetics. I believe apologetics are more for the believer.

And not to so much strengthen their faith as simply to demonstrate that their faith is not illogical or outside of reason. Also be very careful, and we may get to talk about this later, but if you want to study apologetics, let me tell you to stray away from evidentialists and probably pick up a book by Van Thiel, Presuppositional Apologetics. Books like Evidence That Demands a Verdict and things like that, they have some value, but in a real debate, a philosophical debate, you could destroy those books.

Van Thiel has, I think, the best approach to apologetics. I know this is going a little wild, but some of you might do that. All of a sudden, since Van Thiel is so difficult maybe to understand, Robert Raymond has a syllabus called The Justification of Knowledge, which I have.

I'll let you read if you want. What I'm going to say about this, be very careful about. Someone stands up and says, I'm just going to give you ten legal reasons why I believe Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

And based on that, you need to believe in Him. Because what you're actually saying is, based on my ability to argue, I'm going to believe or not believe. Have you ever heard someone maybe does something like this? They'll go, alright, we're going to enter into a debate.

There's an atheist agnostic. There's a poor little old me standing on this side. And they look at me and go, now, before we start, if I can prove to you, I mean, if logically in my arguments, I can defeat you in your statement that Jesus is the Son of God.

If I can prove logically on this platform today that He's not, will you deny Him? And most Christian debaters will go, yeah, sure will. You can prove it. I would go, no.

Even if you defeat every one of my arguments and make me look like a fool up here, I'm not going to deny Him because my faith is not based upon my ability to argue it. It's not based upon anything except a supernatural encounter with God. He regenerated my heart.

So don't ever get in that thing, if you can prove me wrong, well, I'll say, no, I'm not. I mean, I'm not the brightest crayon in the box or the sharpest tool in the shed. I'm sure there's a lot of people that could go around with me and even make me look like a fool.

And I may look like a fool, but I'm not going to deny Christ. I can't deny, and this is what's so good about Van Thiel's apologetics, I can't deny God any more than I can deny my own existence. Well, that's another thing.

See how big this gets? It just keeps getting bigger, doesn't it? It's an amazing thing. Now, just really quick, it says, a historical study informs us of the insights gained and the mistakes made by others previously in understanding Scripture. And I just want to talk about that for just a second.

One of the reasons, you study the patristics, basically kind of like the Greek fathers. You study guys like Origen. Man, that guy.

It's really good to do that. And I'll tell you why. Because they make so many mistakes.

And they make those mistakes because they're trying to make Christianity fit into the Greek philosophical world. And they're trying to make themselves not look stupid. Sometimes I think apologetics is just our attempt to show everybody we're not as dumb as they think we are for believing in Jesus.

And one of the good things about history is you go back and you can see the mistakes that they've made, and then it can help you stay away from those same mistakes. Also, realize this. If Spurgeon and John MacArthur and Piper and all these guys are wrong in some things, and they are, then what are we wrong in? If Augustine is wrong in a lot of things, what are you wrong in? If Luther is wrong.

And it adds to humility, hopefully. To great humility. Now, let's go on for a second.

He puts in here on page 22, therefore Old Testament theology and the New Testament theology and biblical theology. I want to just look at that for a minute. Old Testament theology is, well, what does Deuteronomy teach about prayer? Or what do Psalms teach about prayer? You see, it's just in the context of the Old Testament.

And that's very, very good because it helps you see the working of God in progressive revelation. You understand that? It also keeps you from... Okay, David's son is dying. And he's fasting and praying.

And then he dies. His son dies. And David says what? He can't come back to me, but one day I'll go where? I'll go to Him.

Now, what do most people do? We take our New Testament understanding of heaven and everything else that's been revealed in the New Testament and we take it over there and put it in David's brain. You can't do that. David did not have all the revelation about heaven and all these things that you have today.

Now, I'm not saying he didn't think there was a judgment. He did. He didn't think there was eternity.

He knew about eternity. He knew about a lot of things. But what I'm trying to tell you is this.

Don't take what you know through the New Testament, all these mysteries and things that Paul has said have been revealed and the things that Jesus taught where He said scribes and kings, great men have longed to hear these things and they didn't. Don't take all this information that you've been given in the New Testament and try to jam it back into a statement that someone made in the Old Testament. Does everyone understand where I'm coming from? Very important.

In a sense, you interpret the statements made in the Old Testament in the Old Testament. Now, here's the thing. Everyone study this one day in Bible interpretation.

Now that Christ the Messiah has come, I can go back into the Old Testament and it begins to just explode. And I begin to interpret things in the context of Christ and the Messiah Christologically. But be very careful.

That's what's very good about Old Testament theology and New Testament theology. It interprets that statement made by David in the context of what the Hebrew knew, the Jew knew about that. You say, well, but God inspired it.

Yes, everything David said was inspired. But do not think that David had the same knowledge of all the economy and dispensation of God that the Apostle Paul had. Because with the coming of Christ and the mysteries that were revealed in Him... You see what I'm saying? Please understand, I'm not saying the Old Testament's not inspired.

I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that Old Testament theology and New Testament theology dividing the two things up help us to appreciate the Old Testament in its context and especially appreciate what has happened in the coming of the Messiah. Now, then there's a biblical theology that gives special attention to the teachings of individual authors in sections of Scripture and to the place of each teaching in the historical development of Scripture.

So one might ask, what is the historical development of the teaching about prayer as it is seen throughout the history of the Old Testament and then of the New Testament? Of course, this question comes very close to the question, what does the whole Bible teach us today about prayer, which would be systematic theology. Now, biblical theology, you can begin to see... Alright, let's start off in Genesis where men first called upon the name of the Lord after the fall. And let's gradually trace this revelation concerning prayer through the Old Testament.

Let's see what the prophets, the way they saw this. Let's look at the wisdom literature. Let's look at Job.

Let's go over here and look at what Paul teaches. Now, that has a benefit to it as long as you do it in the context of believing that the Bible is unity and that Paul's not set against David or that Jesus is teaching something to David. We have to realize what Jesus teaches is a greater revelation of what David did.

It's like the difference between the seed and the tree. It's very, very important. Is there any question on that? Okay, I want us to go... In 23, he says, on number 2, at the bottom of the paragraph of number 2, he says, therefore, any Christian reading this book should find his or her Christian life enriched and deepened during this study.

Now, it can't be helped because it's going to happen. But guys, when you first started studying theology, things like that, you can really become a painter. I know I did.

And you can really just mess up. You want to test yourself. If as you get studying theology, you start wrangling and just all you talk about is theology, well, you need to talk about theology.

And if you're a young theologian, you need to wrangle and talk to one another about it. But realize that if that's all you do and it doesn't cast you on your knees in worship, you're missing the whole point. You're missing the whole point.

If it doesn't make you love your wife more, you're missing the whole point. And we all know that. It's just so hard to stay balanced.

Now, at the bottom on number 3, almost at the very bottom of the page, something that's very important. He's talking here about systematic theology as opposed to disorganized theology. He says, in fact, every time a Christian says something about the whole Bible, he or she is, in a sense, doing systematic theology.

Now, what I want you to understand is everybody does systematic theology. Do you realize that? Hillary Clinton does systematic theology. Everybody does systematic theology.

It just might not be very systematic or very organized or very logical. Anytime someone makes a statement, well, me and Jesus got our own thing going. That's systematic theology.

It's wrong. It's not based on Scripture. It is wrong, but it is theology.

Do you see that? Even when a person says, well, I don't need that theology, that is a theological statement. So it's not a question of whether or not the Christian wants to do theology. It's just a question of what kind does he want to do.

Organized or disorganized? Logical or illogical? Reasonable or unreasonable? I mean, even in our praxis, when you do something stupid around your wife and you realize you've done something stupid and she's mad at you, and you go and say, honey, forgive me. And she says, I forgive you. And then you extend your arm like this to put it around her and you draw it back a bloody nub.

And she tells you, I have forgiven you, but give me some space. You've heard that. I just need time.

Well, they do just need time, but they're doing theology. But I would recommend that at that moment don't do theology back now. They're doing theology.

I have forgiven you, but stay away or I am going to eat your face off. At least for a while. Now, if you sit there and go, honey, where would you be if God was like that? You're going to know God in a greater way than you ever imagined because you're going to be beholding His face.

She's going to kill you. But the point of the matter is she's doing theology. It's bad theology, but it's what she's doing.

Okay? So see, this has a tremendous effect on us, doesn't it? Now, I want us to also look at what are doctrines? A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic. And that's true. And this is one of the things that's helped me most and is fascinating to me.

It's just fascinating. I say that I want to do a study on the holiness of God. People always ask me, well, what would you do? With me, it's like, first of all, it's almost like it's exciting.

You know, you see someone on the Discovery Channel and they've just discovered a new Mayan temple. And I mean, they're just sitting there and they're just trying to figure out every one of these symbols. And it's so interesting.

The Scriptures are like that to me. I mean, it's an Indiana Jones type thing. It's a mysterious work.

It's otherworldly. I sit there and what I'll do if I want to study on the holiness of God, I usually start in the book of Genesis. And I'll find every verse in the Bible that deals with the holiness of God.

I'll do that through reading. I'll also do that by looking at systematics. I'll also do that by a wonderful book.

It's Elwell's Topical Analysis of the Bible. Absolutely wonderful. I highly recommend it.

If I could only have two books, it would be the Bible and Elwell's Topical Analysis of the Bible because so much is categorized there for finding things in Scripture. And I'll get all these verses together. And then what will I start doing? I'll start at the very beginning and I'll just start reading them and praying over them.

And I'll read through the whole thing. Of course, I'll have to go back and look at context and all kinds of things. But I'll just start reading through all the passages that have to do with the holiness of God over and over and over and over again.

And then all of a sudden I begin to see, whoa, these verses here and here and here are talking about this aspect of the holiness of God. And these verses here are kind of defining exactly what that means as opposed to the righteousness of God. Wow, I didn't see this before.

And pretty soon what's happened is it's not that one verse just goes in one category. It might go into several categories. But you begin to start seeing each one talking about a different aspect.

The transcendence of God's holiness. Our response to God's holiness. And eventually what happens is it just starts filling out into an outline and then bigger and bigger and bigger.

It's absolutely wonderful. As opposed to just going into groups and saying this is what He says about holiness, which is good. But the other seems to be better.

Let's see here. We're going to stop right there and start next time with the initial assumptions of this book. I forget who it was.

Oh, I know this New Testament scholar. And I remember him one time in class. He said through seminary and graduated and taught my class, I studied 18 hours a day.

He said for my PhD, I worked 18 hours a day. And just talked about all his dedication to get where he was as a scholar. And he said I worked all these years to get my PhD.

And then he broke out crying. And he said I wish I had worked all these years to be a good DAD. And he said I had a child who laid on his deathbed with his fist clenched at God cursing God because God had stole his Father from him.

Now, that kid laying on that deathbed is dying for his own wickedness. But at the same time, we need to realize something. That all our studies and everything, we are a relational people.

And that we're to be obedient with the Word that we receive. And he said that his son would often say, Dad, why have you wasted your whole life studying this Bible when the only thing it's done basically is make me hate you? Now again, the kid's fault. His own wickedness he died for.

But at the same time, think about it. When I came here to Muscle Shoals, I told the elders, I said, I'm not coming here to work harder. I said, I work hard enough already.

I said, I'm not going to neglect my family. To which they all heartily agreed. Just as a side note for you guys, the most important thing in your life ought to be your wife.

Secondly, your children. Everything else comes after. All right.

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