

Homiletics: Eisegesis Is Not a Light Matter - Part 5

by Tim Conway

Tim Conway emphasizes the critical importance of accurately interpreting Scripture and the responsibilities of preachers to convey God's intended message without personal bias.

Duration: 2:06:51

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:14, Ephesians 4:14, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Biblical Interpretation", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

This sermon reflects on the importance of accurately interpreting and teaching the Word of God, emphasizing the dangers of misrepresenting Scripture and the need for pastors to diligently study and adhere to biblical truths. It highlights the story of students in a resistance movement during World War II who faced interrogation and remained firm in their beliefs despite intense pressure, drawing parallels to the unwavering faith required in handling God's Word. The sermon also addresses the significance of discerning spiritual experiences and dreams, emphasizing the importance of aligning them with biblical truths to avoid deception and false teachings.

Transcript

So, last time we were talking about asking questions of the text. A week ago Friday, I don't even know how I came across it, but we watched a movie that was all in German with English subtitles. And it was about the students who were involved in a resistance movement back during World War II.

And these students would go onto campus and leave anti-Nazi flyers around. And it's a true story. And they were caught.

And they were brought to trial. And they were executed. But one of the things that you have is the students being brought to the Gestapo headquarters and interrogated.

And they take you through the interrogation of this young lady that was caught. And you think about interrogating. You're trying to get... The guy was relentless.

He just kept pressing her and pressing her. And she caved. Little by little, she caved.

And in the beginning, she was pretty firm. But he just kept going and he would throw this out and he would throw that out. And he would hit her with this question and hit her with this fact and hit her with this and hit her with this.

And she just caved little by little by little. And there's something in that that is kind of analogous to what it is that we need to do to Scripture. We need to relentlessly interrogate it.

We need to go to it and we need to press Scripture and press Scripture and press Scripture. And sometimes at first, when we press it, it seems pretty reluctant to give up answers. But you press it, you press it, you press it, you press it.

That's the kind of thing that we want to do. Why? Because there's a mandate to preach the Word. And when we think about preaching the Word, we want to proclaim what God says.

And we want to get at the meaning of what God says. It's not just saying what God says. We want to tell people what God means by what He says.

And we need to press the text and press the text and press the text. And that's where our authority comes. Our authority comes just like those prophets of old.

Thus saith the Lord. That is what gave them the authority. That's what we want to be able to say.

Thus saith our God. And we've got to dig and we've got to work and we've got to be able to say, this is what God says. And you can say it gently.

You can say it softly. But this is not a suggestion. We're not making recommendations here.

This is what God says. God means what He says. And there's accountability for what God says.

Men are going to be held accountable to what God says. And so, brothers, this is the work of all work. We can interrogate things and we can ask questions of things.

That's what scientists do all the time. But there's nothing more important than this. People's souls hang in the balance.

We are speaking in behalf of God. We are ambassadors. This is serious, serious business.

And if God loves to conceal a matter, we know it's the glory of a king is what Scripture says. It's the glory of a king to unravel those mysteries. But how much more, brothers, the glory of a preacher to unravel those things.

Because we're going to set what we unravel before the very people of God. We need to be looking to God to un-conceal what is concealed. If it's His glory to conceal, we need to attack those verses and seek through prayer and through our efforts and our studying to rightly handle, rightly divide the Word.

Show yourselves as one approved to God. That's what the Apostle says. Rightly handling the Word of God.

We want to rightly handle it. It's a high calling. High calling.

Listen, I want to read this again. Nehemiah. Because brothers, I think that this so captures our responsibility.

In Nehemiah chapter 8. Also, Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akub, Shebathai, Hodiah, Messiah, Kalita, Azariah, Josabad, Hanun, Peliah, the Levites. All these guys are Levites. They helped the people to understand the Law.

Notice that. Notice the wording. They helped the people.

It's a help to people when you really communicate to them what God says. They helped the people to understand. That's what we want.

As we talked about before, this is something that Lloyd-Jones says. I mean, he was so emphatic that he wanted people to leave that church building that day. Change forever.

You've so put truth into their minds that they can never be the same again. So that's what these guys did. They helped the people to understand the Law while the people remained in their places.

They read from the Book. Isn't that interesting? Go to the New Testament. What does Paul tell Timothy? Read Scripture.

They read from the Book. From the Law of God. Clearly.

Clearly. And they gave the sense. Now you've got to love that.

They gave the sense. They not only read it, they said more. It's not just enough to say God's Word.

There's a need for men like these Levites who help the people understand. And to help them understand, you have to say more than just read the Scripture. You have to unpack it.

What it says is that they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading. They gave the sense. That is critical.

And you remember the other text that I read to you? This one comes from Acts. It's the New Testament. Acts 17, 2 and 3. Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving.

Oh brothers, explain and prove. Now here's where I'm headed. A preacher can stand in the pulpit and say truth, and it's unsubstantiated.

You know what I mean? He hasn't proven it. Paul proved what he said. We need to be thinking all the time if we're going to handle God's Word.

Look, we need to be thinking about what needs to be proved. Paul saying that he proved everything doesn't mean that he proved every possible thing that you could prove. Some things are a given.

I recognize, as preachers do, when they address, you begin to speak. I don't have to define the word, the. Why? Because we assume that it goes without saying that that's understood.

But see, even when you get beyond language, when you get to concepts, when you get to doctrines, when you get to teachings, there is an assumption that the people have an understanding. Now look, sometimes

that assumption is not a good one. Sometimes we assume people know more than they do.

Sometimes we may assume that we need to emphasize things that, given the crowd, we don't. I mean, that's part of it. Part of it is assessing the people that we're listening to.

And here's the thing, it's not always the same. And we recognize that when we're addressing a group of people, it's just that. It's a group of people.

And so I've got people all the way from a possible lost guy that's sitting out here that doesn't know any of our doctrinal background. We may have children. All the way up to people who have been saved for decades and have been avid students of Scripture and can articulate a lot of doctrine.

And so we have a range of people. And so we have to be asking ourselves, you know what? Sometimes we're going to define things that the most learned there, they already know. But we're helping those who don't.

We don't want to be so simplistic that we're wasting people's time with information that they already know, that by and large they already know. I mean, it's not necessary to gear a total sermon for the smallest child that is just now coming to have some capability of understanding. It's not like family devotions where a father sits down and he's got a child two years old, four years old, six years old, and he's going to come at them.

We don't want to preach that way because our responsibility obviously is to feed everybody there. But we need to be mindful. We need to be mindful.

What do we need to prove? And the thing is that unsubstantiated truth, what I'm talking about there is when a guy stands up and he says things that are true, but he's not proving them. And we need to have discernment. What are the things that we need to prove? Now, we're going to look at some examples, but this is a really important concept.

What do we need to prove? Here's what I fear. I fear that when you have a man that stands in the pulpit and he says lots of things that I'm thinking that's true... I mean, that's what I'm thinking all the time. A man's speaking.

Is that true? True? True? I'm looking at it. I'm feeling it. It's true.

It's true. You can prove that over there. That text over there.

Yes, that's a truth. But I recognize this at the same time perhaps in some preachers. He's saying a lot of truth, but he's not getting that truth from the text he's preaching from.

He's just saying lots of things and I can't necessarily find fault, but he's not really unpacking the text at hand. He's saying a lot of things. He's going a lot of places, but he's not really proving it.

And here's my fear. Is that when a man gets in the habit of doing that over much, because he's not proving it, because he's not showing us a biblical case for important things that he's saying, he can get to the place where he can begin to slip his opinions in there and because he's not proving things, he can get to the place where he makes assumptions. He's throwing opinionated assumptions in there and he's saying those as though they're dogmatically true as well, but because he's not substantiating what he's saying, maybe some people will pick it up and say they're testing everything that's been said.

They're being Berean. They're testing, testing, and then something's said and they say, wait a second. Now, Scripture does affirm the other things, but it doesn't affirm that.

But some people, younger perhaps, people that are newer to the faith, they might not catch it. They might just accept it as being true. So, we need to substantiate things.

We need to be mindful about what needs to be substantiated. Like I say, we don't want to waste people's time. We want to give a sense.

Paul proved. That so resonates with people's consciences when you prove something. You prove it.

See? God says it. Yeah. Yeah, He does.

And so we need to constantly ask ourselves, am I giving a sense to the passage? Am I proving this? Or am I doing something else? A man who has a habit of not showing from the Scripture, that's not proving. And so it leaves it... You get men standing in the pulpit all the time and they're not substantiating what they say. And it's like, how do you know whether this is even God speaking or whether this is the man speaking? Show me what God says.

Prove to me what God says. When you're called to preach the Word, we're talking about the thoughts of God. The mind of God.

We are communicating the mind of God to people. And this is a massive calling. Because guys, we've heard that idea of eisegesis.

Reading into the text our own thoughts and our own opinions. And brothers, all you have to do is think about what Scripture says about adding to the Word. You ever come across any text in Scripture that gives some pretty swift warnings about adding to what God says? That is not something that we want to take lightly.

You do not want to make yourself the authority and stand in the pulpit as though you're representing God and you're there simply to articulate your own agenda and your own opinion and your own ideas and your own way of wanting to see the church ran and your own ideas about how these people that are out there before you ought to live their lives or give their money or whatever. There is such a temptation. Men love power.

You stand in the pulpit, men love to have a following. Men love to be honored. Men love to control.

Men love that. And what a temptation to stand in the pulpit and you basically say things from there because you want your way. You want this thing done the way that pleases you.

We have to surrender all the time. We have to bow to that Word. Bow to the Word.

Bow to the Word. What does it say? What does it mean by what it says? Listen to this. Churchleadership.org I don't know anything about them.

I just came across this. Churchleadership.org did a survey recently and they claim that they did their survey. What their numbers were, I don't know how far and wide and broad, but here's what they say.

They did a survey among conservative, reformed, evangelical pastors. Here's what they found. 71% of pastors.

Pastors. See, I recognize that we can distinguish between a pastor and somebody who's teaching in the church. These are pastors.

These are guys that are employed by the church. These are the guys that are the primary pulpit fillers. Listen, conservative, reformed, evangelical.

71% of pastors said when they read the Bible for study, they regularly just looked for what they wanted and did not read it in context. 71%. Three quarters are not studying the context.

They're simply taking Scripture to get out of it what they want to get out of it. 62% of pastors said when they prepared Bible studies or sermons, they rarely looked up what they did not know or understand and just winged it. 62% of pastors said they regularly read into a passage what was not there in order to make their point.

59% of pastors said when they prepared Bible studies or sermons, they did not think it was necessary to make sure their teaching was based on the text or biblically correct. It was more important to connect with the people. Keep in mind, these are conservative, reformed, evangelical pastors.

Now, what pool they did their polling? I have no idea. But these are not like mainline liberals. These are left wing.

Guys, I called this in the beginning Homiletics 101. This is part 5 today. I know this is 101 for you guys, but let's just start here.

I got this example from a website called Stack Exchange. They have a page called Biblical Hermeneutics. I'll just run it by you.

Get our minds kind of going here. There is a paper put on a table in a room with five doors. Each door is taller than the one next to it.

On the paper, the text reads in an ancient Egyptian language, behind the tallest door, you will find the most precious stone. Behind the tallest door, you will find the most precious stone. A class of three literary students are asked to use exegesis to determine what the stone is.

Exegete. Draw from those words. Behind the tallest door, you will find the most precious stone.

The first student argues that the word precious used in the text, karyptka, is very similar in origin to the word karyptko, which means bright orange. Derived from the use of a rare orange herb that was used to paint royal stripes on the faces of wealthy children. He says the intended meaning must therefore be gold.

The second student says, one can't determine what stone is being referred to and is most likely merely representative of all valuable stones. The tallest door is an allegory for an opening extending to heaven. The statement simply means if you live a life that leads upwards, it will bring you true riches.

The third student opens the tallest door and finds a large diamond inside. He takes the text to literally mean that there was a diamond placed in the room whose entrance had a tall door. The text called for external investigation and it was pretty obvious upon inspection.

Which, if any of the three students used exegesis to arrive correctly at the meaning of the text? You all say the third one. Okay. And then, here is somebody commenting and seeking to answer the question, which of the three students used exegesis? Student one makes an attempt at exegesis, but fails on four counts.

He commits the exegetical root word fallacy, trying to assign meaning based solely on etymology. So, let's ask that. How do you avoid that? What happens is, you get somebody that looks... You heard what happened.

Here's the word in the original. I don't know. It almost sounded like it was Greek, but the guy said in the beginning it was Egyptian.

Anyway, you get this word and it seems to be closely related to this other word, and so it's thought that it's derived from this. And so, what you do is, you've got this word over here. It appears similar to this one, so you feel like it might be derived from that.

So you take the meaning of that, the exact meaning of that, you apply it to this, and now you say this is what the word means, as though it's fact. How do you get away from that? If we're confronted by word meaning, how do you avoid the possibility of... Look, if you've got a primary word in the text before you that you're seeking to deal with, tomorrow I want to deal with children of wrath. My primary word is wrath.

I could do this word study that would take me as far back as man can possibly go in the original meanings of these words, and undoubtedly we can find... because I did. If you follow wrath back far enough, it had to do with like a ripe fruit or something that was swelling. Okay, God's wrath means it's like a ripe fruit swelling.

Because I did the etymological study and I came up with this ripe fruit swelling. Is that what I want to leave with people? I mean, how do you get away from not making some butchery of the text as you're studying? Well, for one, we should have access to the lexicons, but have access to more than one. I typically look at six different Greek lexicons.

Thayer's is a classic. Extensive. That's one thing.

Cross-reference your lexicons. But don't just look at lexicons. Look at Scripture itself.

And okay, here's what you do. The word for wrath, orge, I can search that on my Bible works every place it's found, not only in the New Testament, I can search it out every single place that it's found in the Old Testament Septuagint, the Old Testament Greek. It shows up between the Old and the New Testament 250 plus times.

I went through, now look, guys, I recognize if you have a full-time job, if you have a full-time family, I recognize that the degree of study, sometimes you have to rest on the work of others. Sometimes you just need to, you know, look, even though you can go back to where this word was derived from and you can try to do this historical analysis of a word, look, if you just simply pull up a commentary or one of the lexicons, it's going to tell you God's vengeance, God's indignation, God's extreme, fierce anger. It's going to tell you that.

I mean, that's probably enough. What you want to be careful of is, you know, thinking that you're going to be wiser somehow and you're going to search this out and you come to recognize, look, we can recognize this idea of a fruit that's swelling, I mean, it's a picture you can imagine God whose indignation is filling up.

I mean, that's the correlation there.

But examining Scripture, examining its usage, I went through and I looked at all 253 or 256 or whatever it was, passages in the Bible, and some of them I stayed at longer and I looked at these texts and I wanted to get a feel. I tell you, I came away with a feeling. You look at 256 texts on the wrath of God, you come away with a sense.

A fearful sense. I mean, it impacts. See, that's healthy.

That's healthy because I've gotten it right from God's Word. And I feel it now. And you want to go in the pulpit not just with a head knowledge about how to give a lexical definition of a word, you want to feel that word.

You want to feel what it is. Have the tools that you can find these words in Scripture. Now look, there are other words.

Just like in English, you can have indignation, you can have anger, you can have vengeance, you can have wrath. Of course, in the Hebrew and in the Greek, there are multiple words too. And so, I just simply keyed in on Orge.

If you wanted to start looking at the synonymous words, it would have grown into a study beyond what I wanted to do. Even that, even looking at 250 passages may be more than you want to do. But you know what? If you've got the tools to pull it up, even if it throws out a list of 256, you can go through and you can sample.

You can go through and you can look at 10 passages. That's the kind of thing. So, we had this example, which I kind of ran with.

But this first guy, he commits the exegetical root word fallacy trying to assign meaning based solely on etymology. Two, he assumes the pericope. Pericope.

What's pericope? Passage. Portion. Maybe context would even be synonymous.

He assumes the pericope is prose. What's prose? Poetic. He makes a blunder of calling gold a stone as rhetorician noted.

He makes an unwarranted jump from objective observation to absolute certainty in his conclusion. Okay, did you catch that? He makes an unwarranted jump from objective observation to absolute certainty in his conclusion. What did the first student do? He argued that the word precious used in the text, karyptka, is very similar in origin to the word karyptko, which means bright orange, derived from the use of a rare orange herb that was used to paint royal stripes on the faces of wealthy children.

He says the intended meaning must therefore be gold. You see how he dogmatically came to a conclusion? He's basically making an objective observation that there might be word meaning here, and then he assumes that it's absolute, and now he comes to a dogmatic conclusion based on it. You ever seen preachers do that? I have.

Where they begin to look at something that is uncertain, but then somewhere in their process of developing this thing, it could mean, it might possibly mean, there might be a correlation, becomes this certainty that it's like, well, when did we go from this observation of what might be to certainty? You never

proved that it's certain, you just made the leap there. Don't do that, guys. Why? Because you're dealing with God's Word.

And if something in God's Word isn't certain, for you to say that it is certain when you haven't proven that it's certain is to be saying that something is so when it may not be so. That's a big deal. We need to be careful there.

Now, once or twice, because I can remember saying this from the pulpit, I have said that, look, my assumption is that this is so. And from now on, I'm going to speak as though it is. Because it may be something that at that point in time, the evidence that I've given, I recognize, is not absolutely conclusive, but perhaps I've studied this thing for hours and hours and hours and hours, and when I've collected all of it, I'm really persuaded that it's true.

When I'm dealing with the people, I don't want to take the folks listening through the whole six hours that I just went through, and so I might throw one or two of the most conclusive arguments on the table, but I recognize that even those being the most solid arguments for what I'm saying aren't absolutely conclusive. You actually have to go many other places, and I don't simply want to go down that path. I'm not saying whether that's necessarily good or bad, but I think if you're going to do that, if you're going to make that leap, you should at least say to people you're going to make that leap, and if you are, it should be justifiable that you're going to make the leap from some objective observation over here about what might be true, to saying now we're going to assume that it is.

Do you follow what I'm saying? Okay, concerning student number two. Student number two is the one that says one can't determine what stone is being referred to. It is most likely merely representative of all valuable stones.

The tallest door is an allegory. Anyways, he allegorizes. So, the response there, student two makes another attempt at exegesis, but fails on four counts.

She assumes the pericope is allegory. So there's an assumption there's allegory when there isn't. There is allegory in Scripture, and there are things that are spiritualized.

If we're going to spiritualize something, we should be able to prove that it is very probable that it needs to be spiritualized, or that it is allegorical. How would you prove that something is allegorical versus literal? I'm sorry, I wanted to go back to that first guy. He said there are four mistakes.

I've only got three. He assumed the pericope was prose. He commits the exegetical root word fallacy trying to assign meaning based solely on etymology.

Three, he makes the blunder of calling gold a stone. But allegory? Here's the deal. John MacArthur will absolutely refuse to accept that the Song of Solomon should be spiritualized.

So, what do we say to that? Kevin Williams is going to be with us in about two weeks. He preached through Song of Solomon. He spiritualized it to the hilt.

John Gill wrote a commentary on the Song of Solomon, an old Baptist. He spiritualized it to the hilt. I mean, historically, I think it has typically been allegorized.

I don't believe that MacArthur is right. But how would we prove that? I mean, you're going to stand up and you're going to preach. Do we say all the Song of Solomon is a picture of marriage and that's all we should take it as? Well, Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory.

Pilgrim's Progress is basically Bunyan wrote a story that is meant to represent the Christian life. And so when we talk about allegory, we're talking about a story. Basically, God wrote the story in history.

I mean, this is very likely real people. This is Solomon. This is one of his wives.

These are real people. And what God did was He wrote the story and it is a shadow. It's a picture of Christ and the church.

But let me ask you, you know there are guys like MacArthur who say it shouldn't be dealt with in a spiritualized way. Historically, there are many who have obviously disagreed with him. Many who are very godly men who have handled Scripture very well.

But what's our basis? What's the basis for saying something isn't literal? I think when you come to the parables, it's obvious, right? It's like this. The Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God is like this. You get a parable, it's pretty obvious.

Think of the places in Scripture where we would say something should be spiritualized. Well, Christ is our Passover Lamb. You're getting the New Testament giving us pictures.

We have passages that very plainly, I think of Colossians 2, I think of Hebrews. We get places in the New Testament that very clearly show us that these things are an allegory. I think of Galatians 4. This is an allegory.

We have two women, two mountains, two cities. You get plainly in Scripture, there's places where it's calling these things out. Or one of the things I made a big deal about in the eschatology series was like Malachi's Elijah and how Jesus defines that Elijah for us.

That it's John the Baptist and these dispensational pre-mill guys say, I've got to take everything literally. And so they're still looking for Elijah to come and they expect him to come. They think he's going to be one of the two witnesses or whatever.

They can't see. They can't see. Jesus tells us it's Him.

But okay, there do not seem to be indicators in the Song of Solomon as far as when you go to it that right at the introduction, okay, there are going to be Christians that are going to come along a long time from now after the Savior comes and we just want you all to know that when you look back here at this, you should see Christ and the church. Of course, the Old Testament doesn't talk that way. It's the New Testament that talks that way and shows that.

But it's interesting that when Jesus came, His apostles came, they did not make reference to the Song of Solomon in a way that shows us dogmatically that it should be spiritualized. Obviously, if they did, MacArthur would not be refuting that. But I mean, is there a basis for that? Well, if Jesus says that the entirety of the Old Testament is really about Him, it would be a little odd to have an entire book that says nothing about Him in the Old Testament.

Solid logic? Wouldn't Ephesians 5.32 hold any weight? Because the fact that Paul said that this mystery of marriage refers to Christ and the church, not that Christ and the church refers to marriage, but in other words, Christ and the church is first. Any legitimacy to that argument? Yeah, I think both of those are two of the strongest arguments. For me, I think Ephesians 5.32 basically says if you prove in saying this is a picture of marriage, well, you just prove what Paul is saying, that marriage is now a picture of Christ and the church.

So you've proved Paul's point. It's a mystery pointing to Christ and the church. Exactly.

You can no longer say anything is just a picture of a man and a woman. It's just about marriage. Well, wait, you can't say that after what Paul says because even if it is a marriage situation that's given to us, it is a picture of Christ and His church.

Paul is basically telling us you can go back to Genesis and when God first is knitting these two together, God has something much bigger in mind. I have a question. So does it matter? So you say we can't dogmatically or it's not airtight.

We don't have any references necessarily to say Song of Solomon was written to be spiritualized. So I guess the question, I'm wondering does it even matter? Obviously, we can deduce that or we can say that and prove it that it has something to do with it. But I guess can you say, no, this was written that later this is the primary purpose or would that be pressing in your own? Well, I would say this, if you simply use the marriage argument, well, look, I can show you things about my marriage that are not perfect representations of Christ and His church.

And so somebody could go there and say, well, wait a second, just because that may be marriage back there between Solomon and one of his brides, does that necessarily mean that everything there is exactly what Christ would do and what He is? Are we to be pulling that? If you're just going to argue on the marriage basis, which I think there's great legitimacy in that argument, but I think that's the starting place. Jesus is saying, there's various Scriptures. You search the Scriptures.

You think in them. You've got the Emmaus road. But these statements come out.

It's about me. Is it likely? You think about McShane's song. McShane pulls from Rutherford.

It's Rutherford. What's the name? Sands of Time are Sinking? Is that what I'm thinking of? Rutherford. In the House of Wine? Yeah, that comes from there.

He's basically drawing from that reality. But I think that argument, do we have a whole book in the Scripture that has nothing to do with Christ? And it's like, okay, Christ says it has to do with me. Okay, well, go there.

Go there with the assumption this book speaks of Christ because Christ says it all speaks about Him. And so where is He in there? And where is He? When we begin to recognize that reality, we begin to recognize the true Kinsman-Redeemer. I mean, we see something in Boaz.

We begin to recognize that when we see Joseph, God designed that. Have you ever looked at all the parallels between Joseph and Christ? There are multitudes of likenesses there. The similarities between David and Christ.

It's like the similarities between Moses and Christ. God raises up... Everything is meant to steer us to Christ. Steer us to Christ.

Seriously, He's going to give us a book and Christ isn't in there? After all the affirmations that we have in the New Testament that He is everywhere? Well, certainly He's in there. Nothing wavers in my own heart about that book. But I'm just saying, if we're going to stand up, I would think that before you're just going to dogmatically say, this is Christ, because lots of assumptions are made.

Should I just assume that it's Christ because John Gill said it was? I think Hudson Taylor wrote something on the Song of Solomon too. He's got a little book. But should I assume that just because Hudson Taylor said so and John Gill said so? Should that be my authority? Or should I reject it just because John MacArthur said so? We want to preach God's Word.

But look, if I'm looking for Christ there and I've got various reasons from the New Testament that tell me I ought to be expecting to find Him there, then the question would come up, okay, where is He in here? Well, there's various characters here. Which one is very likely Christ? Well, then we go to the next and we go to the marriage and we say, well, the keys are there. You see, that's part of God concealing.

When God conceals things, He likes to spread the keys around that unlock the secrets. And so we want to go looking for those things. I think it was John Owen that said that if you can't find Christ or look for Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures, then it's pretty useless in a sense because he said that the Old Testament always reflects Christ.

Right, but again, going back to that eschatology series, I think one of the flaws of dispensationalism is their insistence on literal meaning. And so they want everything literal and they're scared to death to spiritualize things. But guys, here's the thing, they do have a valid concern.

And what is that concern? It's when we randomly begin to spiritualize everything. And see, that's what is being faulted here. The second person assumes the pericope is allegory.

So there's this assumption of allegory when it shouldn't be assumed. So we need to be careful because people can become reckless with Scripture and they can begin to spiritualize things that in no way should be spiritualized. But student 2, she makes the unjustified claim that one can't determine what stone is being referred to.

She interprets most precious stone, which is grammatically singular and exclusive, as all valuable stones, which is plural and inclusive. She provides an interpretation for her allegory that is unsupported by the text or historical context. This person says, student 3, remember student 3, basically opens the tallest door and finds a large diamond inside.

He takes the text to literally mean that there was a diamond placed in the room whose entrance had a tall door. The text called for external investigation and it was pretty obvious upon inspection. Did you find the keys? This guy says, student 3's exegesis is implied by his action.

He clearly assumed the pericope was prose, took the statement to mean that behind the tallest of the five doors he would find a precious stone and went to investigate. What he found confirmed his suspicion. But everything that happened after he left the table to go investigate was subsequent to exegesis.

Exegesis did not tell him the stone was a diamond. It merely told him where to look. We need to recognize that.

We need to think about what things are saying and what things are not saying. Let me give you an example. You come across just a text like this.

Thy word is truth. Four words in the English. Your word is truth.

John 17, 17. Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy word is truth.

But just think about those last four words. Your word is truth. What is it saying? What isn't it saying? Somebody comes along and says, thy word is truth.

Here it is, brothers and sisters, in my King James Bible. This word is truth. Well, let's just be honest.

Does the text say that the King James Bible is the only inspired version? Obviously, it does not. Okay, somebody comes along and says, thy word is truth. And what they do is, can you imagine somebody doing this? God says His Word is truth.

Therefore, we should reject all prophesying and we should reject all dreams and we should reject all that. Why? Because thy Word is truth. Let me ask you something.

Is this saying that it's impossible to find truth anywhere else? It's not saying that. It's not saying it's impossible to find truth in a magazine or truth in a newspaper. Now, there perhaps is no guarantee that those things are inspired, but even thy Word... let me ask you this.

Does your Word equal the Bible? That's a question worth asking. Not one I think I want to take a whole bunch of time right now to answer. But you know, we can make assumptions.

Like if a guy said, thy Word is truth, and then says, he makes the automatic assumption, this is the only place you find the Word of God, therefore, we should reject all the dreams that the Muslims are having. Here's what I would say. Where in time was this statement made? Right before Jesus went to the cross.

Right after the cross, you have Pentecost and the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Anybody remember Joel's prophecy? And what's going to happen? Dreams? Prophesying? Let me ask you this. Was Jesus denying the authenticity of that by what He said here? Certainly not.

He's certainly not going to deny Joel. He's certainly not going to deny the dreams and the prophesying that came there. So, here's my point.

Some guy comes along. Again, you can imagine. MacArthurites.

Again, well, the dispensational MacArthur corner of the reform movement, and including other reform guys that typically we might put the title of cessationist on. Cessationist. What I mean is the guys that are very uncomfortable with God giving any kind of subjective revelation today.

Whether that be very uncomfortable with God told me. And I get uncomfortable with that too. But I'm not dealing with whether or not we should be looking for more canon.

I do not believe that God is still giving revelation that should be added to our Bibles. I don't believe that at all. But God subjectively communicating with people, the cessationists are very uncomfortable with that.

They want to deny that. And all I'm saying is this, for one of those guys to go to this passage and say, thy Word is truth, and therefore come to conclusions that therefore we should reject all prophesying. But you see, the text doesn't say that.

And if you want to be honest, after Jesus said that, there was prophesying according to Joel. And it was prophesying that was of God. It was of the Spirit of God.

It definitely happened in that early church that clearly is not Jesus' statement, thy Word is truth, is clearly not a statement that is meant to reject the possibility of other forms of revelation. You have to come to that conclusion. Now look, that doesn't mean that I've just substantiated whether we should take a cessationist or a non-cessationist view.

All I'm saying is it doesn't prove the point. And we just need to be honest. It doesn't do that.

And for a guy to quote a text like that and then to come to the conclusions that because thy Word is truth, therefore that isn't truth, that isn't truth. Look, I can tell you this, what do I make of all the dreams that the Muslims are having? I don't know. I don't know.

I do not have the proper tools to examine the authenticity of a dream being had by a guy in the Middle East. I wasn't there. I didn't have the dream.

I wasn't with God. I don't know where it came from. I don't know.

You know things by its fruit. If there are Muslims that are having these dreams and they're coming to the true Christ and their lives are being transformed, am I going to say that God can't do that? No, I'm not. I will not limit God.

And there is nothing in my Bible that says that God cannot speak to Muslims by way of a dream. In fact, I would say that Joel's prophecy... See, what somebody would have to do is prove to me that Joel's prophecy ran out of gas. That somewhere in this church age, that prophecy was intended to take place, and then when the apostles kind of went off the scene, Joel's prophecy then came to expire.

You would have to prove that to me. Nobody's ever been able to sufficiently prove that to me. Which makes me think that God works that way throughout this church age, especially in the frontline areas and especially in times of revival.

You can see things like that. And listen, you can look historically at men who we appreciate and see these kinds of things take place. These prophetic things take place in the lives of men and women.

But my point is this, we need to really step back. Here's the problem, guys. You know what happens so often? A guy has an agenda.

And you know what his agenda is? To preach this point. What's the point? He has become convinced that we need to take a cessationist attitude and so he hits the pulpit with that agenda and he's already got his mind made up. And so now, everything is colored.

And so when he comes across a text like this, Thy Word is Truth, you know what he hears it saying? He hears it saying, this book is truth and you better be suspect of everything else. Listen, I will say, this we have recorded for us and we need to test everything by this book. I don't say you accept everything, but there's nothing in this book that says that there can't be truth outside this book.

And there's nothing in this book that says that God doesn't communicate and interact with His people in ways that transcend this book. You cannot prove that. Because time and again, even in this book, you see examples of God transcending what was at that time in writing.

And just because this canon is closed does not indicate that God is still not personally involved in interacting with His people. And so we just have to be careful that we don't read into passages what we want to find there. Brethren, we have to stand back and bow to Scripture and honestly ask ourselves, what is this saying? Thy Word.

Does Thy Word mean even just this? Which I think would take a more extensive study on looking at how that word is used. Word. Thy Word.

God's Word. Christ's Word. What? Is it just this? Is it more than this? Is it less than this? Do we enter in really dangerous ground if we say it's more than this? I mean, perhaps we do.

But that's something you really have to wrestle with. What is Thy Word? I would think if you're going to teach that passage to just automatically make the assumption it's just this. Well, is it? Is it just this? Or is this all we can really be certain about? Perhaps that's it.

Maybe we would allow, well, it is possible for God to speak to His people outside of here, but how are we going to know what spirit it is? How are we going to know if it's demonic? How are we going to know if it's God? You see, there's something objective about this. Everything outside of this becomes subjective. This is objective.

We've got it in writing. We've got it preserved. But then somebody says, well, how about 1 John 5.7? It's in my King James Bible and it's not in my ESV.

Is that God's Word or is that not? Those are questions I think that are valid. Thy Word. Does 1 John 5.7 sanctify me? Or doesn't it? Is it God's Word? Or isn't it? See, we're interrogating, right? We're asking.

We're asking. Some of these questions may make you feel uncomfortable, but we shouldn't stop asking the questions of the text just because they make us feel uncomfortable. Some of you may be hearing things that I'm saying.

Look, I'm just posing questions. I have strong views about these things. I'm throwing them out there because I think we have to ask questions relentlessly of the text and not just make assumptions.

What does Thy Word mean? What does it mean? Or, let's take another example. You can come to a text like in 1 Timothy 2. Women. There is no question the word modesty is applied to women.

But again, people can have such preconceived ideas that when they hear modesty, all of a sudden, it means, the first church I was in, it meant a woman had long hair, a woman had a head covering on, a woman wore a long dress. That's what it meant. You can have such cultural, church traditional ideas in your head that you can't even honestly look at a text.

And guys come along and they read their own opinions into what that means. They have these ideas about what it means. Now look, does that mean that culture plays no place in it? I would just say, if you're going to say culture should play a place, I mean, you get a word like modesty.

Obviously, Paul meant something by it. But how do I get to the meaning? How do I even find out? What is modesty? What's my scale? But you see, that's asking the questions. It's one thing when you approach the text and it's like, you step into that pulpit, first church I went to, all the women.

I mean, for a woman to wear pants to church? I mean, the pastor there even told me that the pants I was wearing were designed by homosexuals. Look, I'm not saying that what happened there is right. I'm just saying that was the first church that I was a member of and that's what I was exposed to.

But we have to honestly ask questions. What is modesty? And how do we get there? How do we arrive at that? Listen, God wants our women modest. That's in Scripture.

I need to preach that. What does that look like? If I'm going to stand up, I'm going to address God's people and I'm going to speak authoritatively for God. If I say, ladies, your hair better be down to here.

Why there and not here? Well, is it modest? I mean, if all of our ladies shaved all their hair off and came in with mohawks tomorrow, would we say that that's modest? We would say, well, it's not. But it's like if you go to the extreme, you can recognize it. But what happens is, where's the line? And then I think we have to ask ourselves, well, is it possible that something in Scripture has shades of meaning? Is it possible that there isn't one specific cutoff where you go from modesty to immodesty? Is it possible that depending on the culture you're in, modesty changes? Again, I'm asking questions.

I'm not answering them for you. I'm just saying, guys, just like that young German girl was set before the Gestapo agent and he just put her to the Inquisition, we've got to go after the text. We've got to ask, ask, ask.

What does it mean? What does it mean? What is really being said here? It is so easy, guys, to simply have an agenda. We're going to preach this, and you can just bounce off the tops of various verses and throw them out. Look, one of the fallacies of young preachers is just lots of texts and not getting deep into any of them.

And it's shallow teaching. What it does is it may say, oh, I want to approve election. And so, here's 26 verses on God electing or predestinating.

But you know what? To really get to the root and to preach God's Word, we need to slow down. Rather than 26 texts, if we took one or two and we relentlessly put these kind of questions to it, maybe you have to go other places to prove that point. But the only reason you leave that text you're dealing with is to go over here to prove a point about what you're saying here.

You go over there and you bring in this text and you say, look how this text proves what I'm saying about this. You see, it's not like, well, we moved on from the text we started and we've really just forgotten it. Now we're kind of over here and we're playing with this.

And we kind of go over here and we play with this. And we don't ever get back to the original verse. You want to seek to unpack it.

You want to seek to make it known. You want to seek to prove it. Guys, prove to me what modesty means.

Prove. Look, I've been around these guys that legalistically require a certain dress code. I've seen those circles.

And of course, we live in the midst of this world. We see the worldliness. We see worldliness creep into the church.

Look, I have seen those who frown on others if they don't dress like they do. But then I've also seen girls come in the church, they're wearing clothes like they should not be wearing those. But if you're going to talk to God's people about modesty and say, thus saith the Lord, prove it.

Because if you stand in that pulpit as a preacher and you just basically give me your opinion about it, you're not dealing with my conscience at all. Because I'll just say the guy's being legalistic. Or the guy's encouraging worldliness in the church.

Or he's so vague that... How do you deal with a concept like modesty in such a way that you really are going to tug on the consciences of the people? What are you going to do? I mean, we have to think, we have to think, we have to think, we have to think. What is modesty? What is modesty? What does it communicate? What does it convey? What's the purpose for modesty? I mean, if I simply say to the girls, Girls, look, if you come into this church and you wear such things as cause your brothers to habitually stumble, it's better that you have a millstone put around your neck. Ladies, ask your husbands.

What is it that really excites them sexually? I mean, is that what you want to just throw around to all the guys in the church? I mean, there may be ways to go with modesty to where you don't exactly define how long the hair should be or the dress should be, but you're very exactly defining principles that go to the conscience of the hearers. We need to be sensitive of that. Because a guy who stands in the pulpit and says that to the sisters, don't cause your brothers to stumble.

Wow, that tugs on the conscience. You stand in the pulpit and you say, if you don't wear a dress, you're just ungodly and worldly. Well, see, you're not pulling on anybody's conscience.

What you're probably doing is you're probably making a lot of people think, this guy's not preaching the Word. This guy's preaching his own opinion. He can't prove that.

It's not pulling... Anyways, you understand what I'm saying. Can I ask a question about asking questions in allegory? We talked about that a long time ago. If we have the general principle that Jeff was saying, that basically you should be able to find Christ in the Old Testament, and that opens up every verse in the Old Testament to be preached allegorically, it seems dangerous because you can start making up your allegory about it.

So what are the questions that you should ask to be certain that whatever text you're looking at can be... Well, I think one of the... Again, I allude back to that eschatology series. I think that one of the things that caused me to preach that whole series was the fact that I really fear that this dispensational movement today, this dispensational premillennialism, one of their fundamental hermeneutics is this perspicuity of the stand-aloneness of the Old Testament, which I think is totally flawed. I don't think that the Old Testament is darkness, like MacArthur said, if you believe that you need the New Testament to interpret it.

It isn't. It's shadow. It's not darkness.

It's shadow. It's incomplete revelation. And my point in saying all this is, look, I would really want to find the tools for interpreting the Old Testament from Christ and His apostles.

And so, what I would want to do is, as I'm studying my New Testament, I want to pay really careful attention to how the authors, how Christ handled the Old Testament. That would be my starting point. So, okay, if I find that muzzling the ox actually has implications about paying a preacher, and I know it does because that's inspired, then when I look at the rest of the Mosaic Law, I should recognize that I might very likely want to be looking for meaning that is reflected in Christ and His church.

Again, not being unequally yoked. That's inspired. We see the unequally yoked under the Mosaic Law.

We see how it's interpreted for us in the New Testament. You see, we're given tools. Think with me here.

Jesus gives us this parable of the soils. He defines it for us. It's interesting.

He defines several of the parables, but you also notice He doesn't define parables for us. But see, He's given us the tools. He's shown us how we should handle these things by giving us some that are defined for us, just like the Mosaic Law.

In the New Testament, we're given some. Don't be unequally yoked, muzzling the ox. We're given some.

But that gives us the tools to prayerfully, carefully seek to draw meanings out of the others. So I think you want to look for that kind of thing. Can we see that David is clearly a type of Christ? Yes.

Christ is called David. We can prove that. So, here I have a man in the Old Testament who is a picture of Christ.

When I see the way that David and Christ are handled, okay, now that gives me the tools to go in. I also see that Adam and Christ have a very unique relationship. The way he typifies Christ or anti-typifies Christ.

But I see some of these things in the New Testament. Now that helps me when I reach back and deal with Mephibosheth or Joseph. I find these parallels.

And you know, it's not artificial. It's not artificial to say, well, Joseph was sold for silver. Jesus was sold for silver.

And basically, Joseph saved his people. Christ saved his people. You know, that's obvious.

I mean, there are obvious parallels there. There are obvious parallels marked out for us between Adam and Christ, between David and Christ. So, that helps us to deal with... you just think about cities of refuge.

That is a spiritual concept there. You think about the kinsman-redeemer. So then you have Boaz, who is the Old Testament example of a kinsman-redeemer.

So, all of those examples, they've already been preached. And they're clear. But it seems that people will go to try to find new things.

And that's, I guess, more what I was hitting on. Those are established, clear allegories. And now we're going to try to go find something fresh and new.

I know we're kind of like a lie with Abraham about his sister, and now we're going to make up some story about the church or whatever the case is. So, how do we determine if those are good? Well, again, I'm going to want to look for hints. Like I said before, I think as we seek to un-conceal the hidden treasures of the Word, we want to look for the keys in Scripture that unlock things for us.

If I'm just trying to be innovative and I find an Old Testament story and it's like, oh, great, I'm going to try to be innovative and impress everybody with my innovation. I'm going to stand in the pulpit. That's just dangerous.

I think you're mishandling the Word if you're doing that. But if you read Scripture cover to cover and you begin to discover some of these keys, some of these things begin to become evident so that as a preacher, you're now able to stand in the pulpit and actually bring the folks along to see the keys that unlock the treasure box and to take them along your progress and help them to see what you've seen. You want to convince people.

Look, prove, prove, prove. You start messing around with allegorizing, you better be able to prove to me that this is valid. Because if not, you just lost me.

I'm not going down that road with you. I'll hear you, but I'm going to hear you with suspicion. Because I want it proved.

I spend my time in the Word of God. I want to see it there. I want it proven to me.

And if you start taking me down a road and it's like, I think you're just being creative. And even if all the stuff that you say is I can see that it may be true somewhere else in Scripture, unless you're a resurrected Charles Spurgeon who starts spiritualizing a text and it's obvious the Spirit of God just falls upon you and people are falling down in repentance, and that you've got some supernatural gift to do that. I believe you had a God-given gift to be able to do that.

I would not use Spurgeon as an example for how preachers ought to handle the Scriptures when it comes to that kind of thing. I think it's just dangerous. What you can end up doing is you start saying this is what God... To preach the Word means I'm actually getting to the sense of why this text was given.

But I think when Christ says that the Scriptures speak of Him, I really do think that we need to have our eyes open and prayerfully be asking God to show us Christ everywhere. Because I suspect He's there far more than we recognize. I suspect that we should see Him beyond where we see Him if we have eyes to see.

Yeah, I know Spurgeon had a quote saying something to that effect. He would rather hear someone preach about where they can find Christ in a text than preach a text and not show that Christ is in there. Right, and you'll very possibly remember that Spurgeon in his lectures to his students gives the story of the young man who was preaching the text.

And when he got done preaching the text, the old preacher came to him. It wasn't Spurgeon, but an old preacher came to him. And the young man asked him, what do you think of my preaching? And he said, well, there was no Christ in it.

He said, well, Christ wasn't in the text. And he just said, you've got to find Christ in the text. And so, I think that is important.

We need to recognize that these truths are given for Christ to be found. And Scripture is given to glorify God. And we just need to be careful.

If we're expositionally going through a book, and we just happen to be dealing with a few words or with a text or a series of texts, and the truth is that it's speaking very practically and it just happens in the flow, that right at that point, there's no direct reference to Christ. There's no direct reference. I mean, in the context, He's certainly there.

And you need to draw that context in so that you don't have... You've got to recognize that what we're doing when we preach a text is we're preaching one verse that is actually in the midst of a letter that should have been read in its entirety and one sitting typically, and you're diving in in the midst. Those original hearers would have had Christ in there. Christ would have been fresh.

Christ would have been in that very immediate reading. There would have been application to Him. We need to recognize that.

That's one of the things about expositional preaching. We need to recognize what's happening in the context around us and constantly be seeking to draw it in, draw it in, draw it in, draw it in, so that your message is more balanced and it's getting to the heart of the truths about Christ and just the bigger picture. Because there's nothing practical about the Christian life that we don't feed off the very power that flows to us, the grace that flows to us through Christ.

It's seeing Christ. Christ is the example of every moral aspect of our Christian walk. He's the example.

And it is looking Christ that we are changed into His image. And it's the Gospel that fuels our faith. That message of justification is key to us walking in the Spirit and the power of the Spirit.

I mean, that's the argument of the Galatian letter. With guys asking, asking, asking, asking, asking, relentlessly asking questions of the text. Here's one.

Go to Colossians. Now, I find that when I read Colossians, I guess I'll just shoot through a few of these with you. But in Colossians 2, verse 20, if with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used, according to human precepts and teachings.

These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity of the body, but they're of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh." So, let me ask you guys this. Obviously, what he's saying, what he's arguing for here is, being hard on your body does nothing for the flesh. Okay? Over in the 1 Corinthians letter, maybe about chapter 9, Paul says that he does buffet his body.

What's the difference? Jesus says when you fast, okay, buffeting his body, Christ calls us to fast. Christ Himself did fast. The early church fasted.

Asceticism does nothing. It's of no value at all in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. What is asceticism? Imposing restrictions.

So, which is it? How do you teach fasting and have it not be asceticism? How do you preach against asceticism and yet encourage buffeting the body, reigning in the body, giving the black eye to your body, and yet we shouldn't be ascetic? Do not handle, do not touch, do not taste, yet fast. Which means you're not eating. Part of it is why do you submit to regulations? So, one of this seems to be law, external driven.

The other seems to be more internal, really not even compulsory. Okay, that's all we need. I was going to say, in context isn't it pretty clear in those two verses? Because what I was thinking is the Colossians were trying to put the imperative to make the indicative true, whereas the reason Paul does what he's doing in 1 Corinthians 9 is because of what he is.

I am this, therefore I do this. Whereas in Colossians, I want to be this, but I'm not going through Christ, so let me do this to try and be that. Kind of like the place that works have in the life of the Christian.

But you know, we need to be really clear on stuff like that. And you know what? Sometimes young preachers, sometimes older preachers, they can deal with things like this and they just kind of go right over the top of it. You just say things matter-of-factly when there's questions like this.

How do they fit together? How do I sort through it? I guarantee that people wrestle with fasting. How do I view it? Am I bait? Am I twisting God's arm? There is a reward that's promised. What is that reward? How does it come? Can we actually prove? What's the benefit of fasting? Is my life going to be different because I do it? Is it going to be different if I don't do it? Can my fasting fall into this asceticism? How do I refrain from it? I mean, I don't want us to answer all those questions.

It's just a matter of asking the questions. And then, you see, that can be dawning right there. You start asking those kind of questions and feel the necessity to stand up in the pulpit and be able to answer them with some authority, some convincing, proving, showing you dug deeply through Scripture.

That doesn't happen in five minutes. I mean, that takes commitment to diving in and wrestling and wrestling. And how do I put them together? And looking in many different places.

How about this? Go to Romans. Romans 2. Now, let's go to verse 12. "For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law.

And all who have sinned under the law..." Now, look, if you even begin reading anywhere in Romans, you should be hit by more questions than you're likely going to answer in your lifetime. It's like reading Romans as a young believer. I had questions.

Even trying to just get a little portion that I felt like, okay, I got that figured out. Verse 13, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified." Now, just stop right there. Verse 13, "It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified." Just think about those words.

The doers of the law who will be justified. Now, is Paul talking about those who do the law, just like under Moses, that if you kept everything in the book of the law and you did them, it was life. Is that what he's talking about? A justification, a righteousness, which is through the law.

Or, is this a picture of a Christian who's been saved, and they're not hearers only, but they're doers of the law and justified is not being used here in the way that it is used of an ungodly person being justified by the merits of Jesus Christ, but justified is being used here the same way James uses it when he says that we're justified by our works. Which is it? Well, those are the kind of questions that you have to wrestle with. You see, Martin Luther took A, and that's why he thought Romans and James were diametrically opposed.

If he had interpreted it B, it's exactly the same message. I'm not saying that you can't interpret it A and still see consistency with James. How would you come to the conclusion of whether this is hypothetical? This is speaking about somebody if they did actually keep the law, just like God said concerning the law, do this and live.

Well, hypothetically, if you did the law, you would live and you would be justified by your having kept the law and you would be justified in the court of God because you haven't broken the law. Or, does this mean that on judgment day, you will be justified having lived a life of goodness and righteousness? In other words, this isn't so much the legal aspect of that gavel coming down and declaring you righteous because there's no blemish. Christ has paid it all.

Or is this justification a vindication based on your works that show, they justify, they vindicate that in fact, you're the real deal. How would you go about proving to your hearers you may have initial ideas about which one it is, and I've seen reformed guys, solid reformed guys go both ways on the meaning there. Solid preachers differ.

So it's not just a matter of, well, let's look at the commentaries. What in the world do you do when you have six solid commentaries or you go to studylight.org like I've been telling you guys, and you have 26 commentators and 13 believe one and 13 believe the other? Or, what happens a lot of times is, six believe the one, three believe the other, and some of them believe a third view, and some of them believe a fourth view. But you've got to stand up and you've got to dogmatically tell people what God... Just a couple thoughts on that.

Guys, one thing you never want to do is you never want to preach a view. You've got to run, brother. Is it your time? Which means what? We have ten minutes left? Eight minutes left.

There you go, brother. The thing you don't want to do is you don't want to preach something that is unheard of in church history. Here's the thing.

If you say that I take justification there to be this legal declaration in the courtroom of God, and I recognize that when it comes to the law, no man is going to be justified by the law, and so I believe it's hypothetical. Well, can you prove from other places in Scripture that man can't be saved? Man can't be justified by his works? Can you prove that there are texts that say that if a man keeps the whole law, that he will have life? Can you prove A from other passages? Yes, you can. Can you prove B from other passages? Namely, that we're justified by our works? Yes.

So here's the thing. You have biblical standing regardless of which way you go. In other words, you can be certain from other texts that you're not teaching error regardless of which way you go.

Now that doesn't mean that both views are right. One or both are erroneous. But it does at least give you biblical standing on the doctrine itself.

You would not want to say, well, I've got some idea about this that I can't support from any other text. Well, now you're in a bad place. Because if you're saying, the only text that supports my view is this verse right here.

This is the only verse that supports my view. And there's multiple potential meanings. And you're basically taking this text without any other support anywhere else and your interpretation of it is all that stands behind the view.

You don't want to go there. Now, like I say, that doesn't mean that A or B are not erroneous within the context. And see, that's important if you're preaching through Romans, because Paul is developing an argument.

But here's the thing. Guys, look at Romans 2.1. Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges, for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you the judge practice the very same things. Now notice, he's talking about practice.

If you look at the context, is he talking about legal realities? Or is he talking about the practice in our life? That's key. We practice the same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

Do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Because of your heart, an impenitent heart, you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. Now notice what he's done. He's moved to God's righteous judgment.

He's now going to give us a picture of judgment day. Again, he's been dealing with their practice. Their practice.

Their practice. And what he does is he's now going to bring their practice to judgment day. Notice.

He will render to each person according to his works. Isn't that interesting? Again, it's the practice. It's the works.

Notice who on judgment day... this is not theoretical. It's God dividing. On the one hand, those who by patience in well-doing.

It's practice. They patiently did good works. Is this consistent with Scripture? That good works is what we're going to be judged on? Is this consistent with Scripture? That good works is more than by faith that we're going to be justified at the end.

Our lives as they're assessed. Judgment day is all about works. It always is.

Patience and well-doing. Seek for glory, honor, immortality. Those are the ones that are going to get eternal life.

You remember Matthew 25? I was hungry and you fed me. I was hungry and you didn't feed me. What justifies them in that day? Their works.

You see, He's talking about practice. He's talking about works. You keep going.

Verse 7, to those who by patience and well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality will give eternal life. Verse 8, but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. You see the dividing line here.

Again, now He goes through it all over again. Starting the negative first, going to the positive. 9, there will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does.

It's His works. It's His practice. He's a doer of evil.

Remember what's said right there at the end of the Sermon on the Mount? Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness. This is true of the Jew first and also the Greek. But, glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good.

The Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. 4, notice that.

That connects. That connects us. It means that there's not a new thought here.

It means He's carrying on with the same argument for all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law. Again, He's talking about those who are perishing and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. He's talking about judgment day.

And He's talking about those who are in the class of people that are going to have tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil. And He gets in there. He said, God shows no partiality.

What He's showing is there's no partiality in this judgment. If you are this person who's living in sin, you're without the law, it means you're Gentile, you didn't have the light, you didn't have the privilege, you're going to perish without the law. And if you're a Jew and you had the law and you had this light and you're living in all this kind of wicked life, you're going to be judged by the law.

And He says basically the same thing that James says to us. It's not the hearers. Don't be hearers only deceiving your own selves, but be doers of the Word.

That's what He says here. He says it's not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. And you know what's interesting? If you keep reading, when you get over to the end of the chapter, He says in v. 25, circumcision is deed of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

So if a man who is uncircumcised, here's a Gentile, uncircumcised, he keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? He gets down to the end here in v. 29, a Jew is one inwardly. Circumcision is a matter of the heart. By the Spirit, not the letter.

He's talking about a real Christian here. And you see, when you get over later in the book to chapter 8, He talks about those who are fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law. And how do they do it? They walk in the Spirit.

They've been set free from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life. And they now walk in the Spirit, and they fulfill the righteous requirement of the law.

Like you go to 8.13, if you live according to the flesh, you die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. You see, you put to death the deeds of the body.

It's the same message that keeps coming. Now, yes, intermixed in here is a doctrine of justification by faith. I recognize that.

But oh, brethren, it can be really difficult in a letter when you have justification being used in different ways. You have different words being used in different ways. We've talked about flesh being used in different ways.

World being used in different ways. Sometimes the word righteousness is used in different ways. Justification used in different ways.

Brothers, if we're going to get to the nuances of the meanings of these words, it takes digging. And what we don't want is shoddiness, sloppiness. You know what? Better to have spent good, diligent time on a limited portion of Scripture and be able to stand in the pulpit for 30 minutes and preach what you've proven and you can prove to the people that you have solid arguments for, that you can really reign in people's consciences with, than to stand up and speak for 60 minutes and not have done your homework, not have rightly asked the questions.

Don't do shoddy work in handling the Word. It'll suppress you guys. Don't do it.

Look, a guy can be ever so gifted. He can have the eloquence of a Spurgeon. He can be Spirit-filled as Paul Washer or Leonard Ravenhill or Duncan Campbell.

I love Lloyd-Jones. I love Spurgeon, these guys. You can wax eloquently in the pulpit, but if you are not proving and you are not properly, rightly handling the Word, dividing the Word, you're going to lose credibility.

You're going to lose authority. A guy can be ever so gifted, but if he stands in the pulpit and he says things that he just simply is not proving, it doesn't matter. We have lots of men standing in pulpits across this country, across this world, who would make great radio announcers.

They're gifted in their ability to communicate. They're charismatic. They can gather a crowd, but they mishandle the Word of God.

They don't rightly divide the Word. This is God's Word. This is precious.

This is the greatest treasure. This is the Word of life. And we don't want to approach this in any kind of light or lazy fashion.

Guys, relentlessly interrogate the text. Go after it. Go after it.

Don't be ashamed to ask questions. Even if like when we were dealing with by word is truth, whether you feel like it takes you into ground that you feel uncomfortable with, so be it. But ask the questions and prove it.

You may find that you're uncomfortable because when you go to prove it, you recognize that yes, Scripture says things that warn you back from thinking certain things. Great. But have biblical reason.

Test your convictions. Test your presuppositions by the Word. Don't go with your agenda first.

Go to the Word first. Let the Word speak to you. Exegete it.

Let it tell you what God says, what God thinks, what God wants His people to know. Don't assume before you get there that you already know what it says or what you need to say to the people and you're just looking for text in God's Word to prove what you already want to say. And like these guys, all I really want to do is connect with the people.

That's what's really important. No, what's really important is not to tickle people's ears. And it's to stand in the pulpit and say, Thus saith the Lord.

Are we done? Any questions or comments? I mean, this might be off topic, but the church that I came from, they're pretty obsessed with this pastor. I don't know if any of y'all have heard of him, but Stephen Furtick. Anybody ever heard of Stephen Furtick? He's a very known, I guess, popular preacher that's taken wave.

And I got criticized because I pointed out that he had mentioned something. He said that God broke the law for love. God broke the law for love.

What does that mean? And I just felt that wasn't of course right because Christ came to fulfill the law. Well, what we have to remember is that the law is an expression of God's will and God's character. And God can never violate His character.

Now God can give laws like, thou shalt not kill that He imposes upon us, but He can kill, and He's got every right to do it. He's not breaking any law imposed upon Him. That is a law He imposed upon us.

And so, what we know for certain is that God never violates His own character. And so, for one, that just sounds bad. It doesn't sound scriptural.

It doesn't sound sound. That's a convenient pastoral averting of the real issue. You've got to read it in its context.

Well, yeah, if you could find it somewhere in order to put it in a context, the problem is it doesn't exist. And if it doesn't exist, it has no context. But yes, preachers can give answers to people that sound daunting and deep and are really just disguises for not rightly handling the Word.

You mentioned about truth being in Scripture and there's other truth you said, right? Outside of the Scripture, there's other truth you said. Right. But I guess we can refer to the truth and inspire truth, right? I mean, I have three pages here that I believe are full of truth, even aside from the things that I've quoted directly from the Bible.

But how do you know what's truth here? I mean, God certainly isn't saying that there's no truth to be found anywhere except in this book. But what we do know is His Word is truth. Now, I could make the argument that maybe His Word throughout history has involved more than just what was written and recorded.

But I know this, what's in that book falls in that category of the Word. The Word is truth. Everything in that book is truth.

I could make that argument, and if everything in that book is truth, then everything in that book is satisfactory for my sanctification if we're making arguments that way. But how do I know if something is truth outside that book? Well, we're told to test the spirits. We're told to test everything.

How did the Bereans test? They searched the Scriptures to see if it was so. How did Paul go about proving? How did Peter go about proving? We have their example. It was always by quoting the Old Testament Scriptures.

Obviously, now we have the New Testament Scriptures as well. But if we're going to test, we test by that book. It's not enough that somebody comes to me and says, I've got a word from the Lord.

I had a dream. I had a prophetic utterance. I've had a vision.

Everything needs to be tested by the Word. If these Muslims are having dreams, the first place I'm going to go is I want to hear, okay, what dream? I know this. Satan attacks Christ and His work on that cross.

He attacks His person, His character. He attacks His work. If somebody's having a dream that they believe is from God and Christ is in that dream or something's being communicated to them about Christ, I want to know everything.

I want to know everything that's being communicated to them about Christ. Because I know this, you'll find the devil's fingerprints all over false religion and all over that which is demonic. Why? Because they always degrade Christ and His work.

Always. Always. There's no exception.

Always. He hates Him. He seeks to tear Him apart all the time.

And he hates the Word of God. And so, if a guy has a dream and everything in that dream lines up with the biblical Christ and that dream somehow led this Muslim to a missionary who has the Word and now the missionary unpacks the Word to him more fully. See, what is there in that that makes me believe it's demonic? Nothing.

Nothing. Does the devil lead people to missionaries who have the Word of God? No, not usually. I mean, does the devil set forth the true authentic biblical Christ? No, he tears into Christ every opportunity that he can.

And so, we have to test, test, test. So is there truth outside of Scripture? If that dream is from God and actually brought that Muslim to Christ, to the Word of God, was it true? I mean, is there truth in that dream? Of course there is. But how do we know? And so, we need to be careful that we don't shut off everything.

We're not told to shut off everything. What we're told to do is test everything. There's a big difference.

Test it, test it, test it. You need to test. That's the biblical path.

That's the path of safety. We're not in a place of safety if we fail to test. But we're also not in a proper biblical place if we just reject everything.

When the Bible does speak about prophecy and dreams and visions, we know that people in the Scriptures had them. And because you can't find a specific text that says that after the Bible is complete, no one will ever have an authentic dream given to them by God. In fact, what I find is that if I'm actually reading Joel, I find reason to believe that perhaps this is something that we might find throughout church history until Christ returns.

And as so often the case, if you read the missionaries, I'm talking even the reformed guys that have been out on the front lines in foreign mission fields, they have all manner of stories to tell. And you know what? Typically when they're reformed, you hear some of the stories. I know some of these guys can't tell of their experiences in the circles they run in because they wouldn't be believed.

Or they would be counted as heretical. I believe that when you get to the front lines, I believe in times of revival, we often experience many of the very same things they experienced in those early days. Is it normative today? No, it isn't.

It's not normative that people are raising the dead. You just show it to me. It's not happening in our churches.

Is it normative that people are genuinely speaking in tongues and people genuinely have a gift of interpretation and stand up and interpret it? No. We've got a lot of people babbling out there, but typically they don't do it with interpretation and typically they don't do it one at a time. Typically they're not doing it in order.

They're not doing it in any way that resembles 1 Corinthians 14. Again, test everything. If you test it and it doesn't look biblical, we'll reject it.

But we need to be careful. We need to be careful. Why is it that reformed missionaries can't report everything in the circles they run in, the kinds of things that they see in the foreign mission field? Perhaps because the circles they run in have too limited an idea about what God is still doing and willing to do today.

I just think we want to be very careful about putting God in a box. Don't want to grieve the Spirit in ways of unbelief about what the Lord might do. I want to encourage great expectation of God's people.

I want a Christianity that's supernatural. I do. I want miracles.

But I want to hold my Bible real close as they're happening. Okay, let's pray. Father, I pray for these men as we move forward, those that will handle the Word of God.

Lord, I desire that every man in this room that handles Your Word would hear, Well done, good and faithful servant, and prove themselves to be one approved, to be to You rightly handling, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Lord, we need grace for this. We need Your help.

Help us to be faithful, Lord. Give us grace to be faithful. I pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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