

Bible Q&A with Pastor Paul – Episode 28

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Pastor Paul: Hey everybody, we are back with you and we have some more answers to your Bible questions. Let's see what we got.

Sue: Number one question is from Juan, *“I had a discussion about the gifts of the Holy Spirit recently which got me confused about the gift of prophecy. What is the biblical definition of a prophecy? What does it mean to prophesy? Additionally, are we supposed to eagerly desire and pursue this gift as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:1? Thank you for taking your time to answer these questions.”*
And that is very good, that question about prophecy.

Pastor Paul: That is a very good question. A biblical prophet is one we see early on in the Old Testament and we see it moving in through the New Testament as well. And the definition of a prophet is someone who speaks for God, who literally speaks a message. I'm not just talking about like a pastor giving a message. I'm talking about someone who says, I need to give you a message from God. He has given this message to me and I'm going to give it to you. And this is something that the biblical prophets in Israel would do for the nation of Israel or for individuals at times. So it is a speaking forth a message from God. That's the best definition I think we could probably come up with for a prophet. Now, he makes reference to 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul mentions to the church in Corinth that they are to pursue things like the gift of prophecy, but you have to understand it in the context in which it was given. Paul was addressing in 1 Corinthians the fact that the believers in Corinth seemed to be fixated on gifts that really didn't do a whole lot of edification for the body of Christ at large. So he said, I want you to be pursuing gifts that bless people, that

build people up, that edify people, not just you, but others. He was trying to get them to think about others and the kinds of gifts that were going to be a blessing to the church. So he brought up prophecy for that reason. I don't think it's a general word or exhortation that we should accept for all people for all time. I don't think Paul is saying every single Christian should pursue the gift of prophecy. I think Paul would say in a more general sense, hey, if you're going to pursue a spiritual gift, pursue one that blesses the most amount of people. That's what he was going for.

Sue: That's really good because otherwise, if without that kind of general understanding, you would think, as you said, if a prophet, particularly in the Old Testament, is one who speaks to the people for God, then you would think Paul wants everybody to be speaking for God. That sounds like chaos to me.

Pastor Paul: That's right. And that's one of the reasons why I don't think God would give that gift to everyone because the body is made up of a balance of parts and not everybody is a mouth that would be a pretty weird looking body.

Sue: All right. The next question is from Anna, *“Are there degrees of punishment based on sin, with some punishment being eternal and without end?”*

Pastor Paul: First of all, when we're talking about punishment, we're really talking about unbelievers because, as we've mentioned in some previous Q&A's, the Bible doesn't like to use the word punishment very often when we're talking about believers. It uses the word discipline. God disciplines his children. He punishes those who are unbelievers. So in Anna's question, she's making the distinction here about punishments and the different degrees of severity that might be involved in those punishments. So now we have to kind of say here, we're talking about unbelievers.

Sue: Sure.

Pastor Paul: So in that, I don't see degrees of punishment for rejection of Christ. If someone is lost, they've rejected the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I don't see degrees of severity as it relates to the final punishment that people will receive. Now, if she's talking more about temporal or temporary punishments, what I mean by that is punishments that are perhaps involved in this life. I think there are different degrees of severity based on what a person has done and whether it was willful or not and that sort of thing. It's a very challenging question.

Sue: It is because there's not a consistency with how God deals with people that you can pin down and say, this is how he responds. Even the Psalmist talks about, you can tell me which number this is, but about looking at the non-believers like they're fat and happy and they don't seem to be being punished for the things that are going on, but look at me, I'm suffering. So it's just not always the case that someone who has rejected Christ is living a sinful lifestyle, feels a punishment in this life. Not always.

Pastor Paul: That's true.

Sue: God's way and God's time. We just can't pin it down.

Pastor Paul: That's true. And frankly, whatever information we have along these lines is not super clear. In other words, we're putting together clues as best we can.

Sue: All right. We will move on to Temi, *“Hi Pastor Paul and Sue. I attend a Pentecostal church, although in the last year I have undergone a lot of personal development in my walk with Christ, whereby I don't agree and I am now actually skeptical of a lot of teachings I hear. My first question is, can Satan “hold back or delay” our prayers? We're often taught that we need to pray and contend spiritually with satanic forces because they are behind why we don't have our*

prayers answered, and scriptures like Daniel 10:14 are usually used to validate this.”

Pastor Paul: The passage she's referring to in Daniel chapter 10 is one where Daniel has been praying about greater understanding about some of the visions that the Lord has been giving him about the last days and about God's redemptive plan for Israel. And so God sent a messenger, many people believe it was the Lord Himself, perhaps a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, to speak to Daniel and to give him clarity. However, that messenger explains to Daniel that he had been resisted by the prince of the Persian kingdom. And when he uses the word prince, he's referring to a demonic, for lack of a better word, an overlord, a demonic principality or power that had resisted this messenger getting into the Persian kingdom. Because at that time, Persia, the Persian kingdom was very pagan, was very given into demonic and satanic influence. And therefore, the message that Daniel was going to receive from the Lord was delayed. So Temi is asking, is that a passage that can be used to speak to believers about their prayers being delayed or hindered? Here's my response. First of all, I think that to use the passage from Daniel is to take a passage that had biblical import and to inject that into our personal lives, which I don't think is necessarily a good idea. God was sending a messenger to give Daniel a very important and powerful message that was going to live on for thousands of years and to be benefited, or I should say for the benefit of the body of Christ and believers everywhere. That's a pretty huge deal. To use the Daniel passage and say, Satan can hinder or delay the answers to your prayers and you need to do spiritual warfare in order to make sure that your answers get to you, I think is begging the issue a little bit.

Sue: It's a stretch.

Pastor Paul: Now, here's the deal. The Bible does say that we can hinder our prayers. Peter actually makes reference of this in 1 Peter 3:7, where he says;

1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

So if there's really any hindering going on, it's probably something you're doing rather than the enemy. I don't see any other biblical reason to believe that Satan is causing a blockade to prayers other than Daniel 10. And I think that's something you'd have to be very careful to apply to an everyday Christian life or prayer life. The only way that you and I would know that Satan had created a blockade is if the Lord revealed it to us. Otherwise, how would we know? I don't think, again, taking Daniel 10 is a general situation that is applicable to all believers and all prayer lives. I just don't see it that way. So the only way that we would know that our prayers were being hindered by the enemy is if the Lord told us. And if He told us, He would tell us for the purpose of praying. But I don't see any other passage in the New Testament where Paul says you need to do spiritual warfare to make sure the answers to your prayers are getting through.

Sue: So in summary, it's always best for a person to look internally first and say, if I'm asking the Lord for something, Lord, is there anything in my heart that is out of place? Am I holding on to pride? Am I walking willfully into sin? Is there something you want to reveal to me so that we're on the best possible terms?

Pastor Paul: Absolutely. And the reason for that is because we do have biblical evidence that we can hinder our prayers. We don't really have strong biblical

evidence that Satan is in the business of constantly hindering our prayers or the answers to our prayers.

Sue: Very good. Barbara said, *“Since Jesus said He came for the “Lost Sheep of Israel” and primarily interacted with the Jews, how should a Gentile believer (who only came on the scene on the day of Pentecost) receive what Jesus said in the Gospels?”*

Pastor Paul: This is an interesting question, and I think there's a lot behind it because there is a teaching that I have heard that what Jesus said in the Gospels, as recorded in the Gospels, was said to the Jews exclusively. And it really wasn't meant for Gentiles. And what we have in the epistles is more the Gospels to the Gentiles. And I really struggle with that teaching. Yes, there were things that Jesus said during His public ministry that were directed uniquely to the Jews because He came for the lost sheep of Israel. He came to speak and give the Gospel, the good news, to them first. But the good news is the good news. And it doesn't matter whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. There is so much in the Gospels that is spoken to believers. And I don't care whether you're a Jewish believer or a Gentile believer. For example, the Sermon on the Mount is only given to people who have the Holy Spirit. You cannot obey what Jesus gave us in the Sermon on the Mount apart from the Holy Spirit. That can only be given to a believer. So I would say to Barbara, read the Gospels the same way you would read the rest of the New Testament. And recognize those areas where Jesus did speak directly to the Jews. But those are not huge, honestly, in the Gospels. Because as I said, the good news is the good news, whether it applies to Jew or Gentile. There's not two ways to be saved. There's only one way to be saved.

Sue: Sure. That's good. Alvania asks, *“Lately, I've noticed an uptick in arguments that baptism is required for salvation. They counter the example of the thief on the cross by saying he was under the old covenant. I'm a relatively new believer,*

and I want to keep the focus as straight-lined as possible on Jesus. Thank you both for the wonderful depths you are teaching me in the Word.”

Pastor Paul: I've gotten that same argument from people saying, you can't use the thief on the cross as an example of someone who was saved apart from baptism because he was under the old covenant. Jesus hadn't yet died. He hadn't yet paid the price of our sin and so forth. So, okay, fine. Let's give them that. Let's say, all right, the thief on the cross who repented and came to Jesus was under the old covenant. Here's the question. How were people saved under the old covenant? Some people would say, they were saved by keeping the law. That's not true. They were saved by grace through faith. That's why the thief on the cross could be saved the way he was is because he put his faith in Jesus Christ. The sacrifice that was made for all mankind. We are saved the same way under the new covenant. We're saved by grace through faith and this not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast. So I think that the argument is moot. It doesn't really matter whether the thief was under the old covenant or the new covenant. We're saved by grace through faith under both and not by works. And water baptism is a work. It's something we do. It's something I do. And it's frankly something I could boast in. I could say, I was baptized.

Sue: That's why a lot of churches give out certificates. There's proof.

Pastor Paul: There's proof.

Sue: Nothing wrong with it. We did it too.

Pastor Paul: Yes, we gave certificates too because it wasn't what saved a person. It was what they did after they got saved. So, honestly, and I don't know whether Alvania is right when she says that there's an uptick in this. It might just be that in her world right now, she's hearing more about it. I think it's been a constant issue

throughout the years that people have believed that you must be baptized to be saved. And I always look them in the eye and I say, so you're telling me that if an individual says, I believe Jesus died for me on the cross, and that person with all their heart believes and puts their faith in Jesus, but they die before they're baptized, that they are going to hell. That's what you're telling me. And they have to look me in the eye and say, that's what I'm saying. Well, I'm sorry. That's just not consistent with the Word of God. We are saved by grace through faith. And even the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1, he said, 'Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' He didn't send me to baptize. So now you're telling me that Paul wasn't really able to bring people to that final place of truly being saved because he wasn't called to baptize. So uptick or not, we have to just stand fast on the gospel and what it says in the Word of God, particularly Ephesians 2:8-9, which I already quoted, which tells us how we are saved. And Ephesians 2:8-9 doesn't say a word about water baptism. There are many passages that don't say a word.

Sue: I feel like you're going to spend the rest of your life telling people about this.

Pastor Paul: I will.

Sue: Telling people that they are saved by grace through faith.

Pastor Paul: Yes, I will.

Sue: And that's good. Josie says, ***“Hello Pastor Paul and Sue. If Enoch and Elijah didn't die and went to heaven, why did Jesus say in John 3:13 that no one has ever gone into heaven except Him? How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction? Thank you for all you do. May the Lord continue to bless you both.”***

Pastor Paul: The way we reconcile this apparent contradiction is by exposing the assumption that Josie makes in her question that they went to heaven. She says it right there. If Enoch and Elijah didn't die, which they did not, the Bible tells us that,

and she says, and went to heaven, where does it say they went to heaven? I can't find a passage in the Bible that says they went to heaven. No one went to heaven prior to Jesus paying the penalty of our sin. According to what Jesus told us in Luke's gospel, they went to a holding place, and there was a place of comfort there, and there was a place of torment there, but it was referred to as the grave or 'Sheol', and that's where people went, and I believe that's where Enoch and Elijah went. Like Jesus said, no one has gone to heaven except him who came from heaven. He's speaking of himself. So there is no contradiction. People didn't go to heaven prior to Jesus paying the price for our sin.

Sue: Good for clearing that up. Angela says, ***"If you could only choose 2 books of the Bible to give someone to read, which ones would you give them?"***

Pastor Paul: Before I answer this question, I have to say that the Bible was given to us as a whole. Yes, it's made up of 66 individual books, but, really, it's one book. It is the Word of God, and we were intended to receive the whole counsel of God, and when we don't receive the whole counsel of God, we get into trouble. The Sadducees only believed in the first five books of the Old Testament, what we call the Pentateuch, and they embraced great error because they didn't have a broader understanding of God's Word, revelation, and redemptive purpose. So that's the first thing I want to say. The Bible was given to us so that we would study all of it, Genesis to Revelation. Now, let's say I'm living in a communist country where owning a Bible is illegal, and we're getting books of the Bible to people in the Christian underground, and somebody just came to know Christ as their Savior, and I could only get to them two books from the Bible. I would give them the Gospel of John and Paul's letter to the Romans. Those would be the two. Now, I don't think it's not going to be perfect.

Sue: No, because you can't even take any of the New Testament books without leaning on the Old Testament books, without an understanding, even any of the Gospels. It really requires, ultimately, a leaning on the Old Testament. So I understand, but that's a good 'what if' there. I would probably choose either Luke or Matthew because I like the historical background, and I think that helps quite a bit, and probably Ephesians.

Pastor Paul: Really?

Sue: Yeah.

Pastor Paul: Ephesians is a wonderful book too, and you don't want to be without Ephesians.

Sue: I think it's way easier to say what two books would you throw out than what two books would you?

Pastor Paul: And answering this question was really hard for me because I love Colossians.

Sue: Sure.

Pastor Paul: I love Colossians. And of course, without the book of Revelation, you lack a lot of understanding.

Sue: And without the book of Genesis, where did we come from?

Pastor Paul: Exactly.

Sue: You don't have a foundation.

Pastor Paul: Where did sin come from? How did we get into this mess in the first place?

Sue: And then without the book of Exodus, we just leave God's people in slavery, in captivity. You don't know that yet by the end of Genesis, it is very difficult.

Pastor Paul: Yes, it is. We were meant to have all of them.

Sue: Our final question today is from Bea. She says, *“Hello Pastor Paul and Sue, your teachings have clarified so much of the Word for me starting with your Revelation series. Love your Q&A. Could you please explain the difference, if there is any, between the Book of Life and the Lamb's Book of Life?”*

Pastor Paul: I don't believe there is a difference. I think they're one in the same. I think that the terms are used interchangeably. Most of the references in the New Testament to either the Book of Life or the Lamb's Book of Life are found in the book of Revelation. I think the Apostle Paul uses it one other time. Although some people believe that the Book of Life refers to all who've ever lived, and the Lamb's Book of Life is only those who have been born again, I don't see it. I'll admit that it's semi-unclear, but I don't really see enough evidence to say that I think the terms are used interchangeably.

Sue: All right.

Pastor Paul: So I think that's where we end.

Sue: That's where we end for today.

Pastor Paul: That's it for this one, but we'll be back next week with some more of your Bible questions. We thank you for sending them in, and we'll see you then. God bless.