

Bible Q&A with Pastor Paul – Episode 34

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Pastor Paul: Hi, everyone, we are back. I'm Pastor Paul. I'm here with my wife, Sue, and we have some more of your Bible questions that you've been sending in. Let's take a look at the first.

Sue: Here's our list for the new year. It starts with Mark, who says, *“When Jesus sent out the disciples to spread the word in Matthew, why did he bother sending them only to the Jews when God already knew that they would reject Jesus as their Savior? God knows everything past, present and future, right?”*

Pastor Paul: Yes, he does. However, first of all, not every Jew rejected Jesus. Some came to faith. We read in Acts chapter two that when Peter preached to the crowds during the Feast of Pentecost, that 5000 people came to faith in Jesus Christ and the church grew rapidly in Jerusalem. There was a lot of rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Sue: Particularly among the religious leaders. Now that's almost fair to say that the majority, almost all of the religious leaders rejected him. But all of the Hebrew people as a whole, especially the ones that were healed.

Pastor Paul: It's not correct to say that the Jews rejected Jesus as kind of a generalized statement. Many, many, many Jews came to faith. And if even just one of them would have come to faith, he would have given the same message. But the premise of this question is one that frankly kind of bothers me a little bit, because the premise is if God knows these things ahead of time, then why? And this question pertains to the Gospel going out to the Jews. But you could take that same premise

and you could apply it to so many things that you just get yourself into a confused tailspin at the end of the day. If God knew that Adam and Eve were going to fall into sin and death would be the result, why did he create Adam and Eve in the first place? If God knew that Satan was going to be in the garden and bring temptation, then why did he allow that, and on and on and on and on. There are so many questions about God's redemptive plan and God's wisdom that we don't have access to, frankly. Now, this specific question about the Jews, we need to understand that the Gospel had to come first to the Jews because of the element of rejection that took place and the hardening of the heart that Paul talks about in the book of Romans. That's the primary reason the Gospel was then sent to the Gentiles. And that's when Paul begins to speak about how we've been grafted in to the vine and so forth. So, we can see God's mercy and an open heartedness and grace in the midst of all of these things. But I would really caution this writer and frankly, anybody else from composing questions that start with if God knows everything that's going to happen and then posing that question, we can't go there because our brains can't go there. And ultimately, we're going to run into roadblocks that are only going to frustrate us and I think do damage ultimately to our faith.

Sue: And that's the important part.

Pastor Paul: That is really the important part. There are many times I can tell you this as a pastor and as a believer, there are many, many things in the Bible that you kind of cock your head and you go, what about this? And I don't have answers for all of those things. And at the end of the day, I either have to trust the character and the wisdom of God or I have to pass judgment on the character and the wisdom of God and say that doesn't compute.

Sue: And one thing we never want to be caught saying is I would have done it differently.

Pastor Paul: I've probably said that once or twice. But yes, you're absolutely right, because we cannot elevate our wisdom above that of God's. We just can't.

Sue: Our next question is from Gail, and she said, *“I just finished your online study of the book of Joshua and I have started the book of Judges but I can't help wondering why God didn't give the Israelites a leader as was done previously with anointed leaders like Moses and Joshua.”*

Pastor Paul: Obviously, the book of Judges is all about the leaders that God gave to Israel. But I suppose what she's asking is, why were they not of the caliber?

Sue: They don't seem to be as robust. The judges don't seem to be.

Pastor Paul: When you read through the book of Judges and she'll see this as she goes through there, the quality of the judges often matched the decline of the nation itself, and we see that was the case. God raised up spiritual leaders during the time of the judges. But there were also some people that he raised up simply to be deliverers. And they really weren't good spiritual leaders at all. I'm thinking of Samson and maybe even Jephthah and some of the others who really didn't live a life like other judges did. The last of the judges was Samuel. Now he was a great spiritual leader. So things kind of started off good and then they got really bad and then they ended better moving into the time of the kingship.

Sue: But some of those judges that really only get a little paragraph in the text. An entire man's life is boiled down to this little paragraph. Well, that's not the case with Moses and Joshua.

Pastor Paul: That's true.

Sue: So, we don't know how wonderful someone could have been and how faithful they could have been because it just isn't recorded.

Pastor Paul: That's true, and I can understand the question. Why didn't God raise up someone the caliber of a Moses or a Joshua? You think about what these two men, particularly the role they played in the history of Israel, good grief. I mean, Moses was involved in bringing the people out of their slavery in Egypt and then bringing them through the wilderness and giving them the law of God. And then Joshua, of course, was given the task of bringing the nation into the land of promise that God had given to them. Those were monumental tasks, and they were monumental men from the standpoint of the task that was given to them and the quality of the men that they were related to that task. It's just kind of the way things play out. And God used some really incredible personalities, as you read in the book of Judges, to bring about change, to bring about deliverance sometimes, but not to really have a real strong spiritual impact on the people, probably because the people themselves were not in a place to embrace a whole lot of spiritual growth.

Sue: There's a lot of differences too, in just how God chose them. For example, Joshua was raised up for a long time. Gideon was plucked out of the threshing floor, and just told to get going. That's a big difference.

Pastor Paul: That is true.

Sue: In preparation as well.

Pastor Paul: That is true.

Sue: Amanda says, *“I have been hearing of people converting to Catholicism. On a podcast yesterday, one man claimed that Peter was the first Pope, the Catholic Church compiled the Bible, and that the Bible is not the sole infallible authority for Christian faith. I'm just curious how the Bible does or doesn't support current Catholicism practices, traditions, beliefs, relics, etc.”*

Pastor Paul: Well, this is kind of a loaded question at its root, Roman Catholicism and biblical Christianity have a lot in common at their root. I look at Roman Catholicism, I guess I look at biblical Christianity the way you and I try to convey it and practice it. We look at it in a very simple sort of a way coming right from the Bible. And we look at the Bible as the final authority and how we should live our lives and what we should believe. That's obviously not the case with Roman Catholicism. They've added to Christianity. They've added things like popes. They've added things like the role of the priests within Roman Catholicism. They've added...

Sue: They've built quite a structure that goes along with that.

Pastor Paul: An incredible structure. They have added the whole issue of tradition having equal weight with the Bible, literally equal weight to the Bible. They've added the idea that Peter was the first pope. There's no biblical evidence for that, that Peter was the first pope. In fact, there's no biblical evidence for a pope at all.

Sue: Right.

Pastor Paul: They've added things like the adoration of Mary. We respect and honor Mary as biblical Christians, but we do not pray to her because nowhere in the Bible does it even hint or suggest that we are to do that. We see saints differently. Roman Catholicism recognizes that all believers are saints, but they also have some exalted positions set aside for certain individuals who achieve certain standards. Well, that's not in the Bible. It's simply not in the Bible. What it all boils down to is whether or not you are willing to embrace truths, beliefs that are outside of Scripture. That's what it all comes down to. The whole difference between a Protestant or what I like to call a biblical Christian and a Roman Catholic believer comes down to simply this, am I willing to believe in things that are not in the Word? And by the way, that

doesn't just apply to Roman Catholics. You can have other forms of belief that that struggle with that same question. I have decided in my life, and I believe that you have too, we are not going to embrace anything as a biblical belief, or at least equal to a biblical belief, that is not found in the Bible. And that's just simply a decision that we've made, that the Scripture is the sole source of divine inspiration. That's what sola scriptura means. That's that Latin term that is kind of referenced without the Latin in this one. We don't embrace anything outside of the Word. Catholics do, simple as that. Roman Catholics do. You cannot hold strictly to the Bible and believe in the divine office of the pope. You just can't. You can't believe in the way the Eucharist is delivered and so forth within Roman Catholicism if you're going to stick solely to the Scriptures, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's just all these things. So if there are any Roman Catholics who are watching, I would just challenge you and say, is what you believe in the Bible? Check it out and ask yourself this question, am I going to give myself permission to believe something that's not in the Bible? And if you come away and you say, yes, I'm going to give myself permission to believe things that are not in the Bible and hold them with equal authority as things in the Bible, then my second question is, where does that end? Where does that end? Because that's an open door to believe just about anything. And I believe that's a dangerous road to take.

Sue: Good answer for Amanda. All right. Heather says, *“I have many friends trusting in the Lord for a husband and they are just waiting in their houses. I have friends trusting in the Lord to provide and they overwork and never spend a dime. One person does nothing and another person does everything he can. I'm confused about what it looks like to trust God?”* I think she framed the extremes of very well.

Pastor Paul: Well, let's face it. We all have gone through situations where we faced a need. We've prayed about it and then immediately set out to meet the need on our own. We've all done that. That is a very common sort of thing. We see biblical characters doing that, praying about something and then just setting out to try to fix it on their own. We also have known people over the years who feel that their only responsibility is to sit with open hands, open hearts, and just wait on the Lord and that their role in waiting is really just kind of doing nothing. So really, I think what this person is asking is, where's that balance? When we say to trust the Lord, I think trusting the Lord begins not so much in what you're doing or not doing. It's a heart issue. Like so many other things in our faith with Jesus, it comes down to the heart. The Bible says, trust in the Lord with all of your heart. It doesn't say trust in the Lord with all of your effort or trust in the Lord by doing nothing. It doesn't say that. Trust in the Lord with all of your heart. It is at its root a heart matter. So, I would really encourage this person to really use that as a framework to understand really, truly trusting the Lord and what that means. Am I resting? It doesn't matter then what I'm doing after that. If I pray about something and then I get busy and do things related perhaps even to that, the issue is, am I resting in the Lord and in his provision? Or have I kind of thrown that to one side and just decided to fix it on my own?

Sue: It might be easier, honestly, for a person to trust in the Lord themselves. What I hear here, is the observing what other people do, and maybe wanting to help shed some light. When she says she sees one person trusting in the Lord for a husband and just stays home where there are no men, and you kind of have this urge to help them trust in the Lord better, and it's just each one has to look to their own heart. I don't know really how you encourage someone.

Pastor Paul: When we're waiting on the Lord for a directive, sometimes we have to say, "Lord, what would you have me do? Where would you have me go?" If there's

a woman, for example, who says, “Lord, I just want you to bring me a husband.” Well, that's fine. That's all good and fine, but I think her next question should be, “Lord, where would you have me to go? Where would you have me to kind of hang out? You tell me where to go and what to do.” And maybe the Lord says, “Yeah, I want you to go to church.”

Sue: Sure.

Pastor Paul: I'll show you there. But so many times, the Lord would have us to take a step of faith to move into a place of opportunity and then He shows the way as we go. So, I think it's not just a matter of saying, “Lord, I need this,” now I'm going to go in the other room and watch TV. It's, “Lord, you know my needs now show me what you would have me to do.”

Sue: That's very good. Stephanie says, *“I love Through the Bible with Pastor Paul, it has helped me tremendously on my walk with Christ!! Since Ecclesiastes was essentially a view of life apart from God. Can any advice or principles be taken from this book that believers can heed or apply?”*

Pastor Paul: When we say that Ecclesiastes is kind of viewing life apart from God, it doesn't mean that God isn't mentioned in the book of Ecclesiastes. The writer of Ecclesiastes mentions the Lord several times, but then again, you know people who are living their lives under the sun as Ecclesiastes calls it, they do talk about God a lot, even though they may not be applying that faith as they go through their daily lives. So that's the first thing I want to just kind of clarify. But secondly, it's a wisdom literature book and it's in the Bible for a reason. And there is wisdom that is laid out in the book of Ecclesiastes. Even if it's wisdom to show us how not to think or wisdom to help us understand how our unbelieving neighbor thinks, because much of what you do read in the book of Ecclesiastes is about trying to find meaning and

purpose to life under the sun, or if you will, apart from God. And you know that's where the world lives. And I think getting insights from the book of Ecclesiastes is very helpful to helping me understand how my unbelieving neighbor thinks and what kind of things drive him on a day-to-day basis and move him to get up in the morning. He's searching for answers. He's searching for truth. He's searching for pleasure. These are all the things that Solomon talks about in Ecclesiastes. And of course, we know at the end of the book, the conclusion is it's all vanity. Well, that's where the world lives in the midst of vanity, which is emptiness. So, there's much to learn from the book of Ecclesiastes. It's a great book. And I would encourage this writer to go through [my study in Ecclesiastes](#), because we bring those things out in that study.

Sue: Alison says, *“Lately I've been wondering how can a believer keep on sinning most likely by ignorance and not being convicted by the Holy Spirit? For example, I have people close to me who are believers, active in the church and curse in a way that they don't seem to see it as wrong. After a person receives the Holy spirit, shouldn't He convict the person of sins?”*

Pastor Paul: Yeah, sure. And that transformation process can take a long time. I remember after coming to the Lord, it took a while for me to stop using profanity. I learned how to use profanity. I was about 25 years old when I got serious about walking with Jesus. And I had learned how to talk like an unbeliever and that took some time and it really distressed me in those early years. It never caused me to question my faith in the Lord. It certainly caused me to question myself, and to question whether or not I could ever get free from that kind of a rut and habitual behavior. But it takes people a long time. The question that she's asking is, when somebody comes to faith in Jesus, shouldn't there be a level of conviction? Yeah, but we can rebuff that. We can resist that conviction. We can do that. It's very

possible. And the more you do it, the easier it is to do. And sometimes it takes something fairly severe to really awaken a believer to a particular behavior that they're engaging in as to the understanding of it being wrong. So, I think, yes, people should be convicted. Yes, there should be transformation, but it takes time in people's lives. But if you see someone who claims to be a Christian who is not speaking or acting in a way that you believe is consistent with the life of a believer, pray for that person. Pray for them and pray that God would do a work in their hearts.

Sue: Be patient and be kind.

Pastor Paul: Yeah.

Sue: Our last question comes from Jada, *“How do you say stay strong in moments of despair and not fall into depression? How do you still show up for people, such as family and friends or church family and not be all sad in some season of life when you're going through something.”*

Pastor Paul: Through the power of the Holy spirit, and by taking the Word of God also seriously in other areas. She talks about despair. Where does despair come from? Well, it comes from disappointment and frankly, it can come from unbelief. We despair many times because we are struggling with unbelief and we struggle with unbelief because extended periods of difficulty cause us to question God's goodness, question God's love for us, question God's plan for us and sometimes even question our salvation. So, people fall into despair for many different reasons, but there are things that we can do so that when, as Paul the Apostle calls it the day of evil comes, we can take our stand. He talks about this in Ephesians 6 (*see Ephesians 6:10-18*) and he says, first of all, we are to be strong in the power of the Lord. He doesn't expect you and me to be strong in ourselves. God doesn't expect that, but he wants us to be strong in Him. So be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Well, then the apostle Paul begins to talk about the full armor of God and how those things apply to spiritual warfare. One of the most, I wouldn't say the most important, but one of the most important elements of the full armor of God is the shield of faith. And the shield of faith is such that Paul says we can extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy. And it is through those fiery darts of accusation and difficulty and questioning and doubting that people fall into depression and despair. And we need to stay in the Word. So many times people get into the Word when they've gotten into trouble, so what happens is they're in trouble, they're in a difficult place, but they haven't really created a habit of being in the Word, praying, walking in faith and so forth. Now they got catch up to do because they find that they're in a difficult situation and they're really not prepared for it because they haven't been praying. They haven't been spending time in the Word. And they find themselves spiritually in a weakened condition. Now there's an attack going on. That's not the time to learn how to use the weapons of warfare. We don't send soldiers into battle and have them use their rifle or their other weapons of warfare for the very first time they go through training. They go through preparation for months, even years before they go into battle. As believers, ultimately and ideally, we should meet those difficult seasons of life, strengthened, already strengthened in the Word. That rarely happens to be completely honest with you, and that's one of the reasons people do. They fall into despair. So, if you're in a situation in your life right now where things are going pretty good, this is not the time to slack off. This is not the time to stop reading your Bible or stop studying the Word or spending time in prayer or serving the Lord. This is the time to get busy, build yourself up so that when those difficult seasons come, you're going to be able, as Paul says, to take your stand and having done everything to stand. Again, I would encourage this writer to go to [my study in Ecclesiastes](#). I would encourage a study through the whole book, at least chapter six where the apostle Paul talks about spiritual warfare and I deal with some messages there about

how you can recognize spiritual battles, how you can be prepared for spiritual battles and what God has given us to fight spiritual battles. We have everything we need. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness, and that is his antidote to falling into despair and falling into depression is to trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Again, when somebody is going through a hard time, a hard season, they're spiritually depleted. They have not been taking steps to strengthen themselves during the good times. Now they're in a bad time and they come to us and they say, I don't know. I'm at the end of my, my faith is weakened, I'm hanging by a thread. I've had people use that term with me. It's almost useless for me to look that person in the eye and say, trust in the Lord with all of your heart because they're not at a place to do it. They don't have the strength to do that. That takes the edification that comes from being in the Word, being in prayer, being strong in the Lord. So, I want to just really encourage people. She says, her question is, how do you stay away from despair and stuff like that? Get yourself built up in the Word of God.

Sue: There's another layer of this that I see too. And I would add to create habits for all Christians to be creating habits of serving people. She talks about how do you still show up for people and showing up for people, whether it's your infant or your teenager or your aged mother or whoever in your life that people want you to show up for them, that is a matter of choice and habit, and it is serving others. And the more habits we build that we just serve others around us, when the day of trouble comes, it can be a great blessing to have a habit of serving others. It gets us outside of our head, outside of our own heart, outside of those thoughts of despair. And we do the next thing that needs to be done because we have created, we've chosen that path.

Pastor Paul: And that's really important because the day of trouble creates an incredible temptation to fold into ourselves and to focus and fixate on my pain, the

way I'm feeling. Somebody might even say, I can't go do this when I'm feeling so hopeless. You're feeling hopeless because you're fixating, and focusing on what you're going through. And you haven't created a habit, like you say, of reaching outside yourself to bless others.

Sue: And in the same way, if you don't have a habit of serving, when you're feeling this, you're not going to be able to do it in that moment. That's not where your head is going to take you is to say, "I should just go and get into somebody else's world." So all of these things are things that we need, their disciplines.

Pastor Paul: We develop them over time, and determination. I've heard so many people say when they've written in to us, I started going through the Bible, and I had no idea that God was preparing me for a difficult season in my life. And they will write to us and say, I don't think I could have kept my head above the water. Had I not been in the Word every single day like I have for the last three months, six months, a year, whatever. I've heard that several times where God has prompted someone to get into the Word of God, and then they do. They do ultimately face a challenge, but they find that they were able to get through it in faith, trusting God, knowing that he was going to see them through, and that's the opposite of despair.

Sue: Exactly. That is some good encouragement for us to land on here at the end.

Pastor Paul: Good. We have more of your questions coming up in our next episode. We hope that these have been a blessing for you and an encouragement to you, so stay tuned. We'll be back with more soon. Until then, God bless you. Have a good rest of your day. We'll see you later. Bye-bye.