

The Fate of Humanity

(Eight weeks; Six guys; Three perspectives)



Damnation



Annihilation



Restoration

C Clifton Jones
Grass Valley, CA
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Contents

Introduction.....	4
Chapter One Will God restore, annihilate or torment people after they die?	5
Chapter Two Is the Bible the “Word of God”?.....	26
Chapter Three Was Paul the founder of Christianity?	44
Chapter Four Is the Bible free from error?.....	58
Chapter Five Does God alone save people?.....	73
Chapter Six Does God punish sin?	85
Chapter Seven Does a gift need to be received?	103
Chapter Eight Is faith required?	119
Chapter Nine Does anyone <i>really</i> believe in annihilation or torment by God?	136
Epilog After an exhausting eight weeks of texting, and a break... ..	150
Conclusion	152
About the Author	153

Introduction

This book was not planned; it just kind of happened. I sent a text to some of my friends, telling them of a couple of books I was reading, and some comments and questions came back that triggered eight weeks of back-and-forth group texting.

There were six guys in the text group. The main topic of discussion quickly became (and pretty much stayed there over the course of eight weeks): The fate of humanity in light of God's salvation. The big question became: "Does God require belief to exempt humans from being either annihilated or eternally punished?" Three guys answered "yes". The other three guys answered "no". There is no question that faith is presented as a condition in the New Testament. But a condition for what? To prevent God from doing something horrible to those who do not believe? Or is belief the condition under which people can enter into a relationship with God, who loves them and will never annihilate or torment them? This is the essential question that was hammered out from every angle, in this eight-week collection of texts.

I have given each guy a fictitious name -- to protect the guilty! But the names are coded using the first letter in the name to indicate which of the three views each person holds. P for punishment, A for annihilation, and R for restoration. One guy, named Perry, held the punishment view. Two guys, named Andy and Alan, held the annihilation view. Three guys, named Rob, Roy, and Ric, held the restoration view. Additionally, the number of letters in each name are coded: Perry has five letters; Andy and Alan have four; Rob, Roy and Ric have three. This will aid you in identifying the view of each Texter.

Perry - Punishment view

Andy and Alan – Annihilation view

Rob, Roy, and Rick – Restoration view

So, when looking at it from a "yes or no" point of view, it is three guys on each side. And it all came out fairly equal and balanced. No one was limited in how much, or how often they could text; nor were they limited in what they expressed. Some editing of the texts has been done to make them easier to read and understand. But great care was taken to preserve the intent of each contributor. Some footnotes have also been added to aid you in understanding unusual or technical terms, and to give the content of external references (Bible passages, etc.).

Note: *this booklet still needs some work, but it is complete enough to be of some help to those who read it. All things ... in due time!*

Chapter One

Will God restore, annihilate or torment people after they die?

----- Sunday, Jun 6, 2021 -----

Ric (11:44 AM)

Here are two interesting books by Preston Spinkle:

Scandalous Grace: A Book for Tired Christians Seeking Rest

(https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08HW6Z3Y5/ref=cm_sw_r_em_apa_glt_4Z80RJRXF1NHDZ6W7XXD)

Grace/Truth 1.0: Five Conversations Every Thoughtful Christian Should Have About Faith, Sexuality and Gender

(https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07586C81V/ref=cm_sw_r_em_apa_glt_SD3HGQNH3X5PJ2FC56E0)

He was co-author with Francis Chan on "Erasing Hell"... a book defending eternal punishment. He has renounced this EP view and has been dismissed from his previous teaching positions at church and schools. He is a brave fellow.

Andy (1:30 PM)

Yup, Sprinkle has embraced conditional immortality*, as any good exegete** will do. He spoke at a *Rethinking Hell* conference.

* "Conditional Mortality" is the belief that God will annihilate anyone who does not meet his required condition of belief in Him.

Ric (7:44 PM)

Good exegetes always believe they are such! Ha!

Alan (7:46 PM)

Maybe Chan will embrace Conditionalism someday!

Andy (7:51 PM)

He has embraced a more primitive view of the church, so he must be heading that way!

Ric (7:54 PM)

He has some problems right now. But I think he is on his way. He knows too much and already moved away from traditional church. Once he discovers that what's wrong with traditional religion is related to a low view of God... he'll be home free. No one goes back. Why would they?

Perry (7:56 PM)

Guys... If you think you understand God's love, you might only have a sniff. It's God's justice that matters. That's where I suspect all has gone disarray. Apart from God we are dead. The wrath of God, the law of consequences, apart from God... we are dead.

Andy (7:59 PM)

Agreed, God's justice ("death," Rom 6:23*) must be accounted for.

* Rom 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Perry (7:59 PM)

Ephesians 2:3* ... What does it mean? We are, in our natural state, subject to the wrath of God. We have earned punishment.

* Eph 2:3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

Ric (8:00 PM)

Is that your "understanding" of God's love? If so, you should see him that way. Its ok if others see love different than that. I do. Hope that is ok.

Roy (8:00 PM)

Why would He create people to be ignorant, spiritually, so that they don't have the wisdom to choose Him. God's justice should be fair.

Ric (8:01 PM)

Why would he make people who can't understand love when they see it? All of Ephesians chapter 2 is fabulous, especially taken as a whole. We just went thru it twice on the radio. We could do 10 more shows on it. Good choice of a passage, Perry! Love all you guys. I am a blessed man to have such friends!

Perry (8:09 PM)

We are children of wrath. Objects of God's judgement. And for good reason. There is no amount of education, no number of books you can read, no remediation that can save us from this condition. There is a basic problem. Humanity struggles endlessly to correct and redeem itself but never succeeds. We are born into this condition, and there is no way out. Apart from God, we are dead.

Ric (8:11 PM)

No way out? We are already out! All of us. The victory was won on the cross, where it was a finished and complete work. Right? We are not apart from God. This is the good news! I love sharing it. If we were apart from God, we for sure would be dead. And that's the point of the good news. Perry... how is deaconing going. "Deacon" means servant! And you are a true one!

Perry (8:21 PM)

See Romans 1:18*. Know God's anger, from heaven, toward all sinful wicked people who suppress the truth. It's the law of consequences. What about people in some discreet environment who don't know of

God? Evidence of God is all around them. If you choose not to accept God, creation is all around you. Choose not to accept it? That's your choice. Then the law of consequences steps.

* Rom 1:18 God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Ric (8:24 PM)

You read it wrong. Go back and read. The anger is not again people! What is it against? Why do you instinctively read it that way? Figure that out and you will move toward real freedom!

Perry (8:27 PM)

The ESV* says, "All ungodliness and unrighteousness of men".

* ESV is the English Standard Version of the Bible

Ric (8:28 PM)

Not the men... their unrighteousness! Big difference. God is not the enemy, sin is!

Perry (8:30 PM)

I love the sinner. I hate the sin. It's not God's wrath that makes people go to hell. It's God's justice. Even Roy and Andy have responded. Ric and I can go on for days. Where is Rob on all of this? Rob, are you choking on a chicken bone from dinner? No entries from you? It's too late to be out on the golf course! Love and Justice ... We seem to be tripping over these two.

Ric (8:39 PM)

Perry... I am hoping this is all sarcasm on your part. I think I know your heart better than that. If not ... let's talk in person, my friend! Love you! I do not trip over Love and Justice at all. Both are true, both important, and both work together in who God is.

Perry (8:41 PM)

And, Andy, please don't go to annihilation. That seems to underscore what Christ did on the cross. It's too easy a way out. I've got a brother-in-law who says, "I don't want to play this game. When I die, I'm dead." Unfortunately, God trumps your play. He overrules that thought. It goes on after death, despite what a person may want to hope for in this life.

Ric (8:43 PM)

Andy and John Stott*! Both Annihilationists. Not a bad team!


* John Stott is a well-known evangelical Bible teacher. He is also a conditionalist (Annihilationist).

Perry (8:45 PM)

Sarcasm? It's not that simple. It's more like shock therapy. I don't dig in with you guys. Where do these discussions go? They drift further into never land. You guys all are teachers. James* tells you that you have a higher authority to answer to. If I don't do the shock therapy, Who will?

* James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Ric (8:46 PM)

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Roy and I are at an outdoor restaurant, taking in the beautiful evening and basking in the unconditional love of God!

Roy (8:47 PM)

Perry, you are questioning all of it. The same happened to me and then I was teaching 1 Cor 13:4-7. I discovered 16 points of God's unconditional love. I never saw one negative aspect of God's love. It was then that I crossed over to unlimited grace.

* 1Cor 13:4-7 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

Ric (8:47 PM)

And we are here with good wine. Not "new wine". That is biblical! Ha!

Roy (8:49 PM)

What does Paul mean when he says, "Love never fails?"

Ric (8:51 PM)

Is that like ... "love wins"? And does it?

Roy (8:52 PM)

Love never fails, so it must win!

Perry (8:57 PM)

Whoa, I think you are starting with Psalm 46:10*, then moving into the New Testament. Yes, God wins ... in that all will bow to Him in the end. Even those that go to eternal punishment will bow to Him. But off they go into the Lake of Fire! We have a complete disagreement about what it means for God to "win".

* Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Andy (9:01 PM)

Perry, EP* doesn't enjoy the biblical support that Conditionalism** does. If you'd like to meet sometime to discuss the cases for each just let me know. Blessings

* EP is an abbreviation for Eternal Punishment.

** "Conditionalism" is the belief that God will annihilate anyone who does not meet his required condition of belief in Him.

Perry (9:03 PM)

Rob Bell made "Love Wins" a title for a book*. God is love. God is many things. All in harmony. Peter says** that God wants to reconcile with all of us. Well, He is God. If God wants something, Jiminy Christmas, He should get it! But wait! There are two things I have learned about God: He doesn't mess with free will, and He never directly reveals Himself. The Spirit is in me. That I am clear on. But God does not step in visibly to all.

* <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0062049658?ie=UTF8%20&tag=harpercollinsus-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0062049658>.

** 2Peter 3:9 God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Roy (9:08 PM)

Unbelievers will have a picnic lunch and sunbath in the warm fires of hell with family and friends. Their fellowship will be more comforting than whatever an angry God puts them in for eternity.

Ric (9:12 PM)

Yes. We have different views of God. That's ok with me. I actually support other people having other views because they are just like me, and I am like them, with the same mechanism to sense input from God, and to be mistaken about it. But I would encourage you to worship God as you see him, try to be like him, and thank him for all the things you believe he does to people. Do you do this? I do. And don't forget to tell little kids what you believe God to be... in all his furry. Do you do that? Perhaps. There is nothing about God that I hesitate to tell a child. God does not solve his problems with violence, and I want every child to know this. But that just what I do. Everyone must act upon what they honestly believe.

Perry (9:12 PM)

Don't tell that to the "rich man in Hades" who would not feed the hungry man at his gates.* That inspired Dickens to write Christmas Carol. You guys love Jesus. That's our bond. I'm Jesuit educated. We are about bridges, not walls. We are about listening, not speaking. I've done too much of the latter. I've just begun tonight reading "The Gospel Centered Life"*** by Robert Thine and Will Walker. We are made to worship, enjoy, love and serve God ... not ourselves.

* Luke 16:19 There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up

and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.

**https://www.amazon.com/s?k=gospel+centered+life&i=stripbooks&crd=6E5Y56MDE1Y8&srefix=gospel+centered+%2Cstripbooks%2C260&ref=nb_sb_ss_ts-doa-p_1_16

Ric (9:18 PM)

Hey Perry... how do you know God never messes with free will and never directly reveal himself? Never? Seems like you can only claim this for yourself. Hope you realize we love you to pieces! Let's talk live sometime. I miss that Jesuit mind! And ... amen Perry, on our unity in Jesus. Best thing anyone said all night. Love ya. Take care bro. Keep thinking!

Perry (9:23 PM)

Free will? Yes, that's a personal observation. God revealing Himself? That would make it all too easy.

Ric (9:23 PM)

A God who makes it easy? Yes! He does, and He has. He paid it all FOR us! It gets no easier.

Roy (9:23 PM)

Hey, we do all of that stuff, all day long ... instinctively. Jesus is the high priest performing an on-going worship service in us. There is never a moment in my day that I'm not fully experiencing that joy. Come on into the endless fellowship with us! Fully.

Ric (9:24 PM)

He sure as heck messes with my free will ... thankfully! And he directly reveals, plenty. And, I second Roy!

Andy (9:25 PM)

I've got an idea. How about Perry and myself join the Rob and Roy Radio show, to expose universalism!

Ric (9:27 PM)

Yes, and Perry too ... come on the show! I am a regular guest.

Roy (9:27 PM)

We need a sane voice on the radio. I elect Perry! Ha!

Ric (9:27 PM)

Amen!

Perry (9:33 PM)

There are way too many authors who have bravely made a stand on their belief, only to be censored and rejected. Fellas, In 1970 I was 18. Hans Kung* really "spoke" to me. I'm too dumb to understand what he was saying, but I felt his vision and witnessed his pain. My Alma Mater had him come speak. But the church sunk the last nail into his Christian coffin. You guys got it easy. Faith centers around Christ. For

Catholics, it centers around church. Ever seen the movie Doubt? I lived that in the 60's. We have a bond. But a gift is not a gift until it is accepted. That's where we disagree. That involves the understanding of Divine Justice. There is not one of you who would say that the correct response to Christ is faith and repentance and belief in fellowship. This is where we disagree. It's not that Christ set up the volleyball shot so one of us could spike it. Instead it's to recognize our "old Adam"**, and realize we can't do it. But He can. Take a deep breath and ask the Spirit in. It all becomes real, then we can but God doesn't want us to do one darn thing, because if we did we would screw it up. Just believe, trust. Act like what God tells us is true. Then it is done for us. We died, we were raised and Eternal Life is in us. And this is weird: the Heavenly Realm is in us, adopted children, "mini-me Christs" But guys, when is a gift a gift? Answer that for me. My answer: When the gift is accepted!

* Hans Küng was a Swiss Catholic priest, theologian, and author. From 1995 he was president of the Foundation for a Global Ethic. Küng was ordained a priest in 1954, joined the faculty of the University of Tübingen in 1960, and served as a theological adviser during the Second Vatican Council. (Wikipedia)

**Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man (Adam), death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Andy (9:59 PM)

Perry, I don't believe you have me in mind, but, just for the record, I do believe faith is necessary. And that was a good description of the fellowship believers have. Also, just for the record, I do believe there could be punishments meted out before final death, which is not what your Catholic relatives believes. Finally, my view, the Bible does indeed underscore what Jesus did on the cross, since to underscore means to emphasize. What Jesus did on the cross was suffer and die. He wasn't punished forever in hell. He paid the ultimate price and died for us. Jesus' atonement therefore happens to line up quite nicely with conditionalism. Sorry guys if this text caught you late at night. Grace and peace my brothers.

Perry (10:04 PM)

Thanks, Andy!

Ric (10:04 PM)

Can't speak for others, but I say it all the time, in person and in teaching, that we are to repent and believe. Paul says it too, over and over, in Acts. I made an issue of this last time I taught Acts. But what I also say is that repentance and belief ... important as they are in entering into active fellowship with God ... these things earn us nothing, and never can. The only earning is in what Jesus did FOR us. This is the key. The role of faith in salvation is not earning, but gaining. I'm with Paul... BY grace, THRU faith.

Roy (10:08 PM)

Ric is a one of a kind grace-guy that doesn't fit well in the institutional church long term. Rob and I invited him as a guest on our Sunday morning radio program. We feel lucky when he shows up out of no where.

----- Monday, Jun 7, 2021 -----

Ric (7:32 AM)

Roy, keep in mind that “nowhere” is also “now here” (by adding some space)! Ha!
See ya on the show in 2 weeks, unless Perry wants to sit in for me as your official guest.

Rob (7:33 AM)

Very funny, Ric! To be asked to join this conversation is a different experience for me. I'm usually asked to leave! Ha! Here's my input. First: what is the highest view of God you can think of? Second: in Adam, all died. Third: in Christ, all are made alive. Fourth: the Bible presents two views of God--one sees him as conditional love and one sees him as unconditional Love! The first view is primarily pre-cross; the second view is primarily post-cross. Jesus came to show the Jews the Father because they didn't understand Him! Western Christians, also, for the most part don't understand Him either because they are “wannabe Jews”, still living under the law! Love you guys.....unconditionally!!!

Roy (7:36 AM)

That says it all. You are a brilliant theologian, Rob.

Perry (7:40 AM)

I absolutely know of no Christian that would ever say God has conditional love. Wash your mouth out with soap. The issue is about Divine Justice. I know of nobody who believes we are under the law (in the way I understand your use of that phrase). Paul made that clear in Romans ... well, as clear as a lawyer-type can make something clear. Alan Greenspan once testified to a Senate committee and one of the senators said to him, “I understand what you mean,” to which Alan responded, “Senator, if you really understood me, then I said it wrong.”

Ric (7:43 AM)

Sorry... no mouth wash going on here. As for institutional church, it is true that I am not a good fit in any official capacity. However, I am behind all the churches doing what they do, and am always ready to help (unofficially) those who will allow me to do so. Currently, one church allows me to help, appreciates me and accepts me. So I support the pastor there the best I can. But there is soooo much to do outside of institutional church, in the "actual church" that is not in a building. So many people hurting, hungry, lonely, and wanting to be loved. I just go love them wherever they are.

Roy and I sat near a cross-dresser guy in town, last night. He/she would not be accepted at most churches, except on certain conditions. But I see him/her as one who made in the image of God and unconditionally loved by God. So that's what Roy and I do. I have talked with him/her about spiritual things, without being condemning. This is where following Jesus leads ... to all kinds of people!
Perry... lets talk sometime. You doing ok? Love you, bro!

Perry (7:47 AM)

Doing well. I'm in a number of different studies these days. Got tennis this morning at 8:45. Will probably will play until 11. Got golf at 1:30. Want to come sit on my the deck and talk? My wife is trying to schedule a visit with a lady at church whose end is close.

Ric (7:50 AM)

I'm going to the dentist at 10 am. Crown prep... ugh. Later in the week is better for me. Looking forward to your scenic deck, Perry!

Perry (7:50 AM)

Ok.

Ric (7:51 AM)

Perry... I will come by today if I am feeling ok. It will happen, eventually!

Rob (8:02 AM)

PS to Perry: After using Ivory soap to wash my mouth, may I ask this question? Where is the free-will in the verse, "In Adam, all died?" PSS: You seem to do a lot of playing sports with so many people going to eternal torture! Don't you care? Just asking--not judging!


Perry (8:11 AM)

Ok Ric. I'll be on the back deck after 11am. My wife will visit that lady at about 12. Rob, my faith is clear to all I play with sports with. Their responses are interesting. It is fine to present a verse, but what is the context? What Bible verse did you use concerning free will? In general, all humans are flawed and dead to sin. It's just who we are.

Rob (8:40 AM)

You keep mentioning "free will" which, in my not so humble opinion. doesn't exist. So I wonder why you imply that people have free will to accept or reject life, when they didn't have free will when it came to being dead in Adam?

Ric (9:56 AM)

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Let me think now ... Go to dentist, or talk theology with you guys? Hmmmm.... which is more painful? Ha!

Perry (10:47 AM)

And my question was, which Bible verse did your question originate with? Or is this your own commentary? My dad use to do that. His favorite was. "God helps those that help themselves". But that's not in the Bible. So what verse did your free will question originate from? What I mentioned as an observation was that God does two things: First, God flat out doesn't show Himself (Moses was told if he saw God as a human, he could not handle it and would die). Second, God never messes with our free will. Now, God is God. He knows how everything plays out in advance. And he knows how it plays out without messing with our free will. Before I was born, God knew that at this precise moment I would be using something called a cell phone to text this message out. It's my free will to torment you with my texts,

but God knew I was going to do it before I was born! Rob, I love you unconditionally and I even like you. But that's a whole different subject. I disagree with you on church, on free will, on Divine Justice, and on eternal punishment. There are many subjects.

Rob (1:05 PM)

Is that all?

Ric (4:02 PM)

Perry... thanks for the visit today on you deck. Wish it could have been longer. Please allow me to encourage you, based on our discussion: First, this is a very independent minded group of guys. No one will change much as a result of a bunch of texts. But perhaps we all think a little more about things. Second, we are ALL "out numbered" ... not just you, Perry. There are three different main views held in this group, and six different detailed views. So, get rid of any thought that you are out-numbered. We have two firm restorationists (Rob and Roy), two firm conditionalists (Alan and Andy), one eternal punishment guy (you), and one who holds these three views in order of likelihood (myself). Restoration seems the most likely, to me, and EP the least. But I regard all three views as possible. Third, your view, EP, is the most widely held in the Western church. It goes back to Augustine (4th century) and even as far as Tertullian (2nd century). And both were Latin Fathers, not Greek). So, you have plenty of honorable company. Hold your view in faith and share it honestly and confidently, just as you have done in your texts. Don't let old lovable bulldog, Rob, intimidate you! I, personally, support you in holding this view, just as I do the other guys in their views, and as I also do different churches. I am not required by God to be opposed to those I disagree with and have no need or desire to declare them wrong. Thanks for all you have shared. I agree with much of it. I hope we can have more discussion sometime on the things you repeatedly expressed... justice, free will, and faith. These are important! Take care. PS: Keep tuning into radio show. We have a lot more detail to slowly bring to the public. And, I too, would love to see you become a guest. You would be welcome, and you would bring a needed voice! Love ya, bro!

I am reading a book titled, God Can't*, by Thomas Jay Oord, that I got from Alan. Pretty interesting. Worth reading and discussing. But his view of God reminds me of Bill Clinton: "I feel your pain, even though I can't do anything about it". However, he lays out the problem of evil. and a God of love. quite well. Worth reading just the first part. He has five points about God. (No, Rob, he's not a "five point Calvinist"! Ha!). Man oh man, I would love to find a church where all believers are respected, listened to, and not silenced – like this text group! Alan's church is getting close. They may get there this year. Lots of changes seem to be coming. I am very proud of them, and I'm motivated to help them get there.

*https://www.amazon.com/s?k=god+cant&i=stripbooks&crd=3SC8OAEYFKMYK&srefix=god+cant%2Cstripbooks%2C463&ref=nb_sb_ss_ts-doa-p_1_8

Andy (6:10 PM)

FYI, I too, might be of the ordering type like Ric. but with a different order. Also, regarding the restorationist position, it should be noted that there's at least two forms: one held by the early church that says people can be saved through repentance/faith after going into hell, and the newer one (maybe it

arose in the 19th century?) that says repentance/faith isn't necessary to be saved because all already are. This latter form dispenses with any kind of post-mortem judgement whereas the first (historical) one doesn't.

Ric (7:11 PM)

Sure. That is true, Andy. We just swap the top two from each other. I'm good with that. But keep in mind that I am NOT saying that "repentance and faith are not necessary to be saved". The Greek word in the NT for salvation is simply "delivered". The word itself has no association with hell or annihilation ... but it can be! So, the question is: Saved (delivered) from what? My take is that it is saved (delivered) from the power of sin in this life, not from some eternal consequence that God has additionally added as a result of some kind of wrath against unbelievers. the entanglement with sin in this life. I have found nothing in the words used in the Greek NT that requires any to conclude that God will do something horrible to people after they die. However, people are free to interpret those words in that way. I just don't know why they would choose to accuse God of such horror.

The way I see the big picture is that the EP folks have "tradition" as their main proof. But only for the last 1500 years, not 2000! The conditionalists have the "bible proof texts" edge. They have a lot of verses. But as I stated above, the words used in those verses do not require hell or annihilation. But they do allow it. Reconcilers claim big picture, character of God, and reason as their basis. The reason EP is lowest on my list (and WAY below the other two) is: First, tradition is not very impressive or reliable, and too dependent on humans. Second, the biblical support is almost nil. There are only a few verses you can make fit EP, if you spin them. There are no verses that state clearly that God will torment people in hell endlessly. Also, most of their claims are based on bad translations that are, well... traditional! Third, before Augustine (who is the father of EP, as presented in his City of God, book 22*), the majority of church fathers were reconcile or conditional (and most were Greek church fathers). Tertullian is the only exception, and he was a Latin Father, like Augie. With all this, I cannot possibly place EP top of my list, be intellectually honest, and look people straight in the face? Conditionalism is growing! But they are taking from the EP folks. Resorationism is growing too. They are taking from both other groups. I do not know of anyone going the other way. Why would they? I can tell you that, when you realize that God has already "reconciled the world to himself, thru Jesus on the cross" you're home! There is no higher place to go, and you will never go back to lower. Yes... God is that big!

* https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0354-0430,_Augustinus,_De_Civitate_Dei_Contra_Paganos,_EN.pdf

Perry (7:35 PM)

Biblical support of EP is almost nil? Don't agree.

Rob (8:09 PM)

Wouldn't you know it? A fella I have come to know, Lee O'Hare, who used to be high up in one of the more prominent denominations just posted this today. I make no claim as to the accuracy of his claims, but Ric might be able to: Contrary to popular religious teaching Jesus NEVER - not one time - EVER spoke about hell. That is a fact! The word was not even invented until 725 AD. He spoke very clearly and

specifically about Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, a very real place just outside of the city walls of Jerusalem with a dreaded history where the Jews once sacrificed their children and had them burned alive. Both Jeremiah and Isaiah referred to this place in their prophecies about the fate of the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the destruction of the city in 586 BC when the Babylonians laid waste to Jerusalem and threw hundreds of thousands of dead Jews into that cursed valley where they were burned up and consumed. Jesus was warning the Jewish leaders of the same fate which was going to come upon them within one generation if they did not repent and receive Him as their Messiah. This is, in fact, exactly what happened in 70 AD, as chronicled by Josephus in his work, The Jewish Wars when the Roman general Titus laid siege to the city of Jerusalem and massacred almost the entire population and threw the dead bodies of the Jews into that very same valley of Gehenna where they were consumed by fire and eaten by worms. Hell is NOT some future mythological place of eternal torment for people who don't accept Jesus. That is a man-made religious myth used to control and manipulate the masses ever since the Dark Ages of Roman Catholicism and has been carried over into Evangelical tradition. It should have been renounced and cast out of the belief system of the church along with the worship of the saints, the fallacy of the papacy, the selling of indulgences and many other pagan practices rejected during the Reformation. Unfortunately Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, et. al, did not go far enough in the 16th century. It is time to finish the work started during the Reformation and purge the Church of the pagan false belief in a place of eternal punishment called "hell".

Ric (8:14 PM)

Rob, I cannot verify that Lee O'Hare wrote that, but I can verify that what you claim he wrote is absolutely true. I did a big study on the history of hell and found that (and more) to be true. Few Christians know this, or even care, This is exactly why I stated above, "most of their (EP) claims are based on bad translations."

Andy (8:24 PM)

Though not a Unitarian, I believe Lee is right. Interestingly, "gehenna" is not referenced anywhere in Acts. Why? Probably because the threat of being thrown into gehenna didn't apply to those living outside of Jerusalem.

Ric (8:34 PM)

Andy, only Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention Gehenna. James also does once, too. But John, Paul, Luke in Acts, Peter, Jude, and the author of Hebrews never do! That is quite a statistic. Perry, I would love to see your biblical support for EP. Like I said, it CAN be found by reading it in, but clear, straight forward passages, in the Greek text? Naw! Happy to go thru any verses you find. Perhaps I missed something!!! In order to demonstrate never-ending punishment in the NT, you must meet three requirements. A passage must contain: Never ending punishment, inflicted by God (not just a ref reference to torment), and no restoring or corrective purpose in the punishment. General verses on judgment will not do. Go for it bro! I anxiously await. This was the study that turned me away from EP. I outline all of this in my booklet, Stubborn Facts About Hell*. Feel free to go thru it and find any errors. There may be some. Your pastor read thru it and only found one problem. I corrected it and thanked him. I'm not saying EP cannot be true, nor that you should not believe it. Just giving you my reasons why I had to put it at the bottom of my list of views. It just has so little, and such poor evidence... biblically, historically and logically.

I had no control over its lack of evidence! I just had to acknowledge it. As I have told many people, "it was my delightful devastation". Took me 60 years to discover this. But so happy I did!

* http://www.godislovethefellowship.com/assets/Stubborn_Facts_about_Hel25305.pdf

Perry (9:49 PM)

Ok guys, I will pull up my verses. Jesus was really cool. Always tender, but firm. He had no reason to say hell. But to not accept the gift -- It's separation. Want to call it hell? Want to call it absence of hope? What was the rich guy who never fed the guy at his gate? Where did he end up? Why did Dickens write Christmas Carol? Matthew 5:22* ... Let's dive into that. Matthew 25:41*, Mark 9:43*. These are pretty clear guys. Matthew 25:46*. Don't side-step these verses

* Matt 5:22 Anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 25:41&46 41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ... Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.

Ric (9:53 PM)

No, I don't side-step them at all. No need to do so. But do not read into them, either! Did you apply my 3 requirements for a clear verse on eternal punishment? 1. Never ending in duration. 2. Punishment directly by God. 3. No correcting purpose. Did you find these 3 things in your verses? If not, it cannot be never-ending punishment (unless you read it in). And, you gotta answer the following to understand those verses: In Matt 5:22 & Mark 9:44 what word in Greek has been translated "hell" in ESV? Does it mean what we mean in English? In Matt 25:41& 46... what word in Greek has been translated "eternal" in ESV? Does it mean what we mean in English? Also, what does "fire" and "punishment" mean? Do these mean hell? Why? Or you can skip these questions and just assume it means "eternal punishment". But this is not clear and straightforward evidence. It is reading a "desired conclusion" into them.

Jesus referred to gehenna only five times on 4 occasions. He never presented it as a place of never-ending torment. Paul never uses gehenna in any of his writings. He never warned about gehenna in Roman's. Why not? He never warned anyone of gehenna in all his mission travels in acts. Why not? I do not see in your verses, that punishment is: never ending, directly applied by God, and no corrective purpose. Do you? Help me out here. Jesus was cool, tender and firm. True! So is love! If there were a hell, and people were going there, Jesus would have EVERY reason to warn of it. But he did not. If "absence of hope" is hell... I agree! The "rich man in Hades" parable fails in all 3 items: It is not said that it is never ending; His torment is not said to be from God; and there is a repentance and correcting purpose happening in the rich man! This parable is far from never-ending punishment in hell. Many assume it is, but that is all they are doing. Like I said, the evidence in the Bible for never-ending punishment is nil! More verses? Please!

----- Tuesday, Jun 8, 2021 -----

Perry (7:12 AM)

I'm off to tennis. I'll look at these when I get home. But as I was falling asleep last night, this thought came to mind: There are a number of things Jesus did not directly address. The Trinity is one that has caused questions from other faiths.

Ric (7:15 AM)

Arguing from silence (what is not said) is always weak. And, yes, the Trinity as taught by the Nicene Creed* is not taught in the NT (using the same wording!) This should be a concern about the validity of that Creed, for you (and all Christians). It is not good evidence to support hell!

* I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. ... And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

Rob (9:11 AM)

My experience with myself and many other believers is that concerning ourselves, we are not very honest. "Cognitive dissonance" is a malady with which we are afflicted! This malady has been around and infected hundreds of generations and the cure seems to be to discover that God is Good and is Love, and that He Good/Love all the time! There is, however, a placebo that mimics the cure and it is recognized by the imposition of ""BUT after "God is love"!

Ric (9:33 AM)

Take your time responding, Perry. Remember ... your study and conclusions are primarily for you, just as mine are for me. Whatever you decide is ok with me. We are all "men of faith" who cannot prove anything in this realm of "things unseen". Your faith is as legit as the next person's, and you must sort out with your God, wife, and local assembly what is best for you. But I hope you will look into these things carefully and thoroughly. You cannot lose in doing so! Your faith will either grow as is, or change if needed. Always ask yourself: "Am I reading IN what is not there?" Ya gotta look closely and be honest with yourself. But that is something no one can do for another. I just present facts (and I try to be careful about what those are), I ask good questions, and I offer my honest beliefs as my personal opinions. Trust me... a guy can get in big trouble just doing that! Ha! Happy to work slowly and completely thru any and all passages in the NT. I'm sure I would learn new things too. Take care!

Perry (12:14 PM)

Cognitive dissonance??? Inconsistent thoughts, beliefs and attitudes. What is it that you are saying Rob? Where did you come up with this thesis? But, but, but, Rob ... Our disagreement is not about love, good/love all the time. Our disagreement, I believe, is about Divine Justice. Yet you come out of left field with some pretty wild ideas. And if someone doesn't challenge you, you seem to build off these ideas and drift further away.

Ric (2:09 PM)

Yes... we all agree on more than we disagree. And even then, let's focus on where we do agree and love each other, unconditionally. I'm still looking for that kind of gathering! Christians have, legitimately, different views of love, grace, justice, judgment, punishment, forgiveness, faith, and many other concepts. And that is ok! But the greatest is love* – not the doctrine of it, but the practice of it.

* 1Cor 13:13 Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Rob (4:23 PM)

Perry, may I beg to differ on what we believe about love. My standard is 1Cor 13 without any caveats. You seem to want to put a harness on God's love with a humanistic view of Justice. Apparently god is so egomaniacal he puts to the torch any who don't put their trust in him! You can judge me anyway you like. It's been done before ... to my enjoyment!

Perry (5:49 PM)

That is not even close to what I believe. Way off base, Rob.

Rob (7:20 PM)

That's the problem with texting. Let's get together!

Ric (9:43 PM)

Good idea!!!

Rob (9:52 PM)

Been gone all day and only briefly checked in from time to time. Just wanted to lovingly ask you who disagree with the total restoration of all mankind to consider the fact that we who do believe in it, at one time we believed as you! And also, to ask you to consider what my wife did and also what my best friend did, both who adamantly disagreed with my new understanding back in 2011. My wife would not discuss it with me, and my best friend argued the position you maintain quite ardently. But after a couple of years they both told God that if the reconciliation of all was true, they wanted to know it. Within a short time, they were rewarded with the knowledge of the truth from the HS. So, I dare you to do the same. Don't believe because some dumb human does, only believe what the HS reveals! Thanks for listening.

----- Wednesday, Jun 9, 2021 -----

Perry (6:43 AM)

Hey Roy ... We all have the mind of Christ which should give some level of spiritual common sense. We can drop the Bible verses for a moment. I'll ask a question: How many parents would desire a horrible, everlasting punishment on their child for refusing to acknowledge them as parents during their life span? Would human justice demand torturing their kid for eternity when human fragility and discernment camouflaged unconditional love the parents held for their child. Why would God, who promises to be a better parent, sign off on eternal and harsh punishment on a kid who thought independence was the way?

I will make one last entry, for you, Ric. Please stop asking me, as a human, to begin understanding who God is in all His Divine ways. God is beyond our understanding. That's ok with me. So here becomes our needed word ... Mystery! I can find verses supporting God's love. I can find verses supporting God's wrath. Mystery! It's ok that we don't understand everything. But individually, Divine Love, Divine Justice ... They seem at odds against one another. But scripturally, both are described. Mystery! I'm not expected to understand God totally. What kind of a God would he be if I could? But do not turn your back on the warnings that are in the Bible. And you guys -- you are all teachers on radio, or in person, or in the pulpit. James warns us. You are expected to do it better. You are held to higher standards. That's the thing I most liked about Oswald Chambers ... He got the "mystery" thing!

I would not recommend trying to lump together in one neat package understanding Divine Love and Divine Justice -- two separate subjects. Someday it's all going to make sense when we leave these present earthly bodies. Until then, Bible verses describing God's justice, and the book of Revelation, is pretty rough all on its own. These must be read for what God is telling us about Himself. He is a jealous God. Bible verses about Divine Love must be read because He is a loving God. The book of John, all on its own, is very clear about that. At this stage of your development, you don't have to have one neat package for everything. You need not exclude one thing, only to mess up other things in the neat package !

Andy (8:56 AM)

Thanks, Perry. I don't preach behind a pulpit any longer. In fact, I actually moved it out when I was still teaching and pastoring. I agree that there's a stricter judgement for teachers (James 3:1), but we all teach in some capacity! Regarding divine love and justice, conditionalism meets them both. Perry, I'm not sure to what extent you've studied the conditional immortality view, but would you consider listening to the following talk by Edward Fudge?* (It's just over an hour in length.) He wrote the go to book on the subject, too. Grace and peace, brothers!

* <https://youtu.be/oHUPpmbTOV4>

Perry (9:06 AM)

My church holds that annihilation discounts what Christ did on the cross. It's too easy of a way out, my pastor once said from our pulpit.

Andy (9:26 AM)

Actually, EP discounts what Christ did on the cross. He didn't die and go to hell forever. Christ "died" for our sins. Conditionalism actually upholds what Christ did on the cross. I don't need to tell you this, but you shouldn't give defacto credence to a church or teacher. And I gave this same advice to people when I served as a pastor! Are you willing to listen and test the teaching in the above talk?

Ric (11:17 AM)

Amen, Andy!!! Paul did not encourage us to blindly trust teachers and leaders, or writings! Listen carefully to them, for sure. But, "examine everything CAREFULLY", was his exhortation. We are wise to do this, and then spend time alone with God. There, we will find the truth.... not in any writings, teachings,

or traditions ... helpful as they are. Only from God's spirit who indwells each one of us, do we find ultimate truth. And we do not need to go around trying to oversee that sacred process in others. We can trust others "alone with God" to take care of their "truth business" with Him! Thanks to all of you, for all your great input the past few days. This has been very helpful to me, and I know even better, now, how to serve others at home, in public, and at church ... as I try to support the efforts there. I would happily take this wonderful message of love and seeking true unity (far above mere doctrine) into other settings too... if I were allowed to do so. But that is usually not the case. So we all just need to be faithful to God and others, in love, where ever he plants us. I see the church where Alan is pastor, moving in this direction. I hope to be able to encourage, enhance and support this effort there (and elsewhere, when allowed). As you all know, it is not an easy task ... when humans are involved! Ha! But we gotta try. Right?

----- Thursday, Jun 10, 2021 -----

Ric (9:49 PM)

We had a big discussion on "universalism" in The Shack study class tonight, led by Alan at his church. It was quite good. All views for, and against, were shared. No one was shunned. Quite a special group! Very proud of them.

----- Saturday, Jun 12, 2021 -----

Perry (11:39 AM)

I will depart from this thread. Separately, I am communicating with Andy about Edward Fudge. I like Fudge, but I don't agree with him. I love the way he presents himself and how he researches his responses before he makes them. I don't believe Andy is a universal restoration believer. But Andy and I do differ on annihilation. The rest of you, I leave you with Matthew chapter 21. Matthew is not just another human author, writing some book about this or that. He is one of those inspired authors! Start at Matthew 21:33. The kingdom of God will be given to people who will produce its fruit. What you guys talk about misleads people! Oh, it's love, Roy. That's what we talk about. No, you twist it. Go on to Matthew 22. The kingdom is now open to gentiles. Thank you, God, for opening it up to me...a gentile! But don't miss the point of the wedding feast, and the guy not dressed right. Yikes! Many are invited, but few are chosen. You guys can go on reading your A,B,C authors about anything that endorses what you believe. Hey, it's another run for our team! But it's about the Bible, guys! Stop twisting it because of what? You think it easier to fulfill the great commission...to glorify God, go out and make disciples of all nations...by what you do? Revelation 22:17!

Rob (11:51 AM)

I had come to the same decision! But few want to hear from someone who has been on both sides.

Ric (12:49 PM)

Andy is a proud conditionalist. He is in some very good company, including John Stott! You have leveled many accusations, Perry. And perhaps rightly so. Let me know if you ever want to go thru any of those passages, carefully and completely. Happy to do so. But you do not need me! You can do this on your own. Conditionalism is a respectable, biblically-based view. It is a far cry from EP that has very little biblical basis. I like Fudge, too. As he claims in his book... God's fire either: punishes, consumes, or refines! And those are the three views we are discussing.

----- Sunday, Jun 13, 2021 -----

Ric (9:17 PM)

Wow, guys, check this out. SBC* coming apart? (Got this from Rob): 'Take the Ship' - Conservatives Aim to Commandeer Southern Baptists (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/12/us/southern-baptists-conservatives.html>).

Alan (9:19 PM)

Well let's hope the conservatives deal with the sex abuse problems that are plaguing the SBC right now.

Ric (9:21 AM)

One of many problems

----- Saturday, Jun 19, 2021 -----

Ric (11:20 AM)

Perry sent me this link to a video by Fudge on conditionalism: <https://youtu.be/oHUPpmbTOV4>. Fudge puts to rest the question of which view has the most directly stated "proof texts" in the Bible. It is a sixty-minute summary of his book. I recommend it, if you want to understand this view. The book is even better than the video. Conditionalists and restorationist both appreciate the book greatly (though they draw different conclusions about the final destiny of humanity). It thoroughly demonstrates the bankruptcy of the EP view. EP bases its view mostly on tradition, starting with Augustine in 400 AD. They claim to be biblical, but they cannot hold a candle to the amount and quality of proof texts given by fudge and others (who he lists in the video).

Restorationists base their view, ultimately, on God himself -- not just ancient writings (the Bible) or tradition. And, they base it on God's character, moral excellence, and his required success of the plan he clearly had to save the world. Take your choice! What I like about fudge is that he gets more said in less time. No fluff. Tons of facts. Very little speculation... but some! It is 3 hours of info in 1 hour of time. Watch it, if you can. Or better, read his book. For me, restoration is still clearly the only view that presents God as who he MUST be... the God who saves (not the one who torments or annihilates). But all three views are possible (from a human point of view, not actually), and I love and support those who prefer to hold

another view. My love and unity with them is far above any mere message, doctrine, or position. I see them all as my “equals” in every sense before God, as men and women of faith in things that cannot be seen or proven.... except to ourselves.

Perry (11:30 AM)

EP can hold quite a large candle.

Ric (11:32 AM)

Ha, ha! I love it! Good one, Perry ... and a very hot candle, too! Did you find very much the fudge video that was inaccurate? If so... what? I'm not taking about disagreement, but inaccuracies! I found disagreement, but his facts are very sound! I looked up all of his stuff, and more, many years ago. The church history stuff too! No EP people ever touch this stuff, not at your church, Perry, or even the seminary where I graduated. Frankly, my church and my seminary did not tell me everything. It was either dishonesty or dereliction of duty. Either way, I had to dig it out for myself over a 40 year period. Another great topic, widely ignored, is the reliability of the biblical texts (inerrancy). I hope we will address this on the radio in the future. This is at the foundation of everything. If it has problems, so do all the proof texts!

Perry (11:42 AM)

Not inaccuracies. Skipping over “Rich Man and Lazarus” is huge to me. Where is Cain right now? How's it been for him these last 8000 years? Come judgement day, what happens to him? Fire of consumption? Zap, gone! When I was in high school, we had a saying: Life's a bear, then you die! So, Cain, has it been tough on you these last 8000 years? Well, you are eventually going to get zapped. Very cheery guys!

Ric (11:47 AM)

Good questions! Do you have answers that satisfy you?

Perry (12:11 PM)

Yes. The gate is narrow. Camel through the eye of a needle. Great wedding feast. Many called, but who showed up? But. Baby. You better have the right clothes on!

Ric (12:27 PM)

Wow. Good stuff to talk about, Perry. Save this text for our next live discussion.

Perry (12:43 PM)

2 Peter 3:9 -- That's your poster child, Rob Bell based his book on it. It's a mystery. Yeah, a lot of this is a mystery to me. He's God and I'm not expected to understand Him. That's my “get out of jail card” from Monopoly. But seriously, look at the Bible in the big scope. Our God is a jealous God. He drops poisonous snakes out of the sky. So, keep your eyes on Him. Don't fixate on Love, to the exclusion of Justice.

Ric (12:53 PM)

Good conclusion, Perry! Not love vs justice. Instead, loving justice! We can never separate the two. God sure doesn't. All of both of these (love and justice) is who he is, all the time. The question is....what is

justice? Our puny kind, or God's magnificent kind? I agree with George McDonald (CS Lewis' mentor), on what ultimately justice is.

Perry (1:56 PM)

George did human justice and mercy. Justice punishes sin. Mercy doesn't punish sin. How does God's justice include the ultimate good of the one being judged? That was George's question. Mystery?

Ric (2:53 PM)

It did not seem to be a mystery to him. He knew (as I do) that "justice" is "making things right". This is what that word means in Greek, which is the word used in the NT. George's conclusion is that if God is just, and brings justice, then it must be ultimate justice (making things ultimately right). And this can only be reconciliation of the world by God to himself. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." This sermon* by George McDonald on justice changed my thinking, big time, about a decade ago. Ric's paraphrase of George: Ultimate justice can only be God making things ultimately right. Hit me like a ton of bricks!

* <http://www.online-literature.com/george-macdonald/unspoken-sermons/31/>

Perry (3:49 PM)

That is a lovely sermon. Not once was a Bible verse used. I refer to that as a topical sermon. We don't do that at our church.

Ric (5:35 PM)

As I said previously, if proof texts are your basis.... conditionalism is the best choice! George was not doing a Bible study. He was explain what justice is, by revealing who God must be based on all that is said about him in the NT,

Perry (9:08 PM)

I don't agree.

Chapter Two

Is the Bible the “Word of God”?

----- Sunday, Jun 20, 2021 -----

Ric (8:10 AM)

Good! And you shouldn't agree, if your honest view of God is that Justice is something other than "making things right". But you can't change the meaning of the word (dika) used by Paul in Greek. And, yes, your church is very biblical based. I commend them for that. But are they willing to look at all verses, as fudge has done, and provide all of this factual info to its members? Or do they withhold this information, censor and control what is allowed, all in the name of "protecting people from error"? Is the flow of info up to leaders? How about a class on all of this stuff, where anyone can come, and have a loving and respectful discussion (as we have done in these texts), without control of info, without name calling, trusting the HS, who indwells people, to be the truth detector? That would be a great class to have! And if most go away holding to EP, they will hold it all the more confidently. But I doubt your church would, or even could, ever take the risk. How about listening to Paul on "examining everything carefully", and then listening to the HS for truth! What a concept! Bottom line is: What does it really mean to be 'Biblical'?

Perry (8:36 AM)

I don't think the other guys on this thread want to be hearing from me, but if you say something and I don't respond, is that implying that I am thinking that what you said is plausible? Well, it is not. My church is willing to discuss anything that is biblical-- carte blanche.

Ric (8:38 AM)

That is terrific. Then go initiate such a class, as I have outlined above. Your church will actually be stronger, as a result, either way. Ya can't lose getting ALL the info out there to the folks!

Perry (8:41 AM)

Biblical: Take the Bible as a whole.

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 say something...but when Luke recorded what Peter said in Acts 3:23 he is even more firm... Peter was on fire (filled with the Holy Spirit) ... you have to take it all in.

Ric (8:46 AM)

Yes, take Bible as a whole. My point, exactly. Also, do not leave anything out, nor add anything to it (i.e. read your meaning into it). This takes discipline and courage. The other guys have all indicated to me that the discussions are helpful. And I am confident that they appreciate your contribution as being equal with theirs. I sure do! I visited your church recently. I support them and always have. I love them too. I have many long-time friends. I appreciate their positive influence in our community, along with many other fine churches – all who disagree with each other! But they all agree on the things that really matter. Perry, you could teach such a class as I outlined above. You are a member in good standing, respected, a deacon, more than qualified, and have the gift of gab like all of us on this thread! Ha! Go for it, bro. Be a good "Jesuit" and bring some objectivity to your church. They need it and would be better off for it.

Andy (9:02 AM)

I agree, Perry's church is a good church. I'd say they're one of the flagship churches in our community. Happy Father's Day to you all!

Ric (11:22 AM)

Many churches are good churches. They all have high points and blind spots, just like people. I guess because... they are all made up of people.

Rob (12:44 PM)

What is "biblical"? That's up to everyone's interpretation! What is biblical to me is not biblical to some of you!

Ric (3:46 PM)

Well said, Rob. Not sure what a "flag ship church" would be, nor if one is even needed. Perhaps a small gathering, that is very NT based, would be the best choice.

Andy (4:11 PM)

By flagship churches I'd say big, established, and influential would be words to describe them. As I think about the early church, the Jerusalem and Antioch churches would probably be closest to the idea of flagship churches. Are flagship-type churches needed? I don't think so. God is at work in all sized churches.

Ric (4:29 PM)

Fair enough. Thanks for the details. When will you visit our area again, Andy? Give me a heads up ! when you do. Love to see ya.

Alan (4:32 PM)

I was saved at a small Assemblies of God country church.

Ric (4:50 PM)

Our community has quite a history of churches. I know about a lot of it. Been watching since 1979. LOTS of changes. Yet God keeps working in people, through the HS. Remember, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, not the Holy Bible. Never get those confused or exchanged.

Alan (4:51 PM)

"Biblical" is often just code for "I found some Bible verses that kinda sound like they support my opinion/presuppositions"!

Ric (4:54 PM)

Good one, Alan! So true. We have all done it. Man oh man, my in-depth study into textual criticism of the NT has been mind blowing, and another game changer for me. So amazing. And all biblical arguments are no better than the truth about the reliability of the copies we have. I hope some of this will make it onto the radio show some day. Maybe even into Andy's podcasts! Christians are largely ignorant of how their current Bible came about.

Andy (6:33 PM)

Speaking of podcasts... I'm planning on uploading them to YouTube tonight and hopefully figuring out how to put them on a playlist. I'll send that playlist over your way.

Alan (6:34 PM)

Is it just you, Andy, or is your buddy still doing them with you?

Andy (6:37 PM)

Just me... hopefully it's not too boring.

Ric (6:41 PM)

I will like them!

Alan (6:57 PM)


If I ever did a podcast, I'd call it "The Happy Heretic." I really admire you guys that do the radio show, or a podcast. It's very impressive.


Ric (7:40 PM)


Hey, Alan, I will do that Happy Heretic thing with you. I've used that term a lot. But I think I've already seen a Happy Heretic pod cast somewhere. I also use "delightful devastation". It was very devastating to be rejected by family and friends for simply believing God is bigger than he really is (in their minds). But it was the greatest delight in my life, to find out that my lord and savior, whom I have walked with since I was a kid, is not an evil tormentor, and that I can fully trust him with my life and the lives of all those I love. When there is no higher place to go in your realization of God... you are "home"! It gets no sweeter than this! Alan... what would your topics be?

----- Wednesday, Jun 23, 2021 -----


Ric (8:17 AM)


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Interesting new books

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More!

Rob (8:38 AM)

It will be interesting to view the reaction of those who view the Bible as the "Word of God", if we ever do shows about this.

Ric (8:39 AM)

It will, indeed!

Andy (10:32 AM)

The "Word of God", first and foremost, refers to Jesus. But the expression is also used to refer to Bible content. Additionally, there are many instances of God speaking through the prophets in the Old Testament, which could certainly be said to be the "Word of God. (See Paul's use of the expression in 1 Corinthians 14:36).

Ric (11:04 AM)

True about Jesus is the Word of God! When Paul preached "the word", he preached Jesus! Clearly, repeatedly. That was always his focus. "Christ and him crucified." But I do not see much, if any ref to any "writings" being the Word of God. Certainly not the Bible, since it did not officially exist as a whole volume until nearly 400 AD. The Bible is an historical record of those who claimed things that were spoken to be the Word of God (OT prophets and Paul telling others about Jesus). But referring to the bible as the "word of God" is a man-made idea from church history. I have not yet identified when this began. I do not mind people calling it WOG, but I also want them to know how this came about, and to not allow "writings" to replace, or be equal to God. This is the role of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus sent. He did not promise to send the Holy Bible. Seems like the HS should be the "final authority for faith and practice", not writings that are really just testimonies (testaments). But there is a whole range of views on the bible, just like there are of eternal destiny!

Andy (11:13 AM)

1 Corinthians 14:36

"Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?" Paul, above, is referring to Bible content, particularly Old Testament Bible content.

Ric (11:13 AM)

Andy, the context of that passage seems to be about people exercising their gift of prophesy. And the larger context of chapters 12-14 is about spiritual gifts. No doubt that they considered what they uttered, using their gift, to be God's Word thru them (whether it really was or not). But I see little justification for concluding that OT writings, themselves, are the WOG. Certainly, what OT prophets spoke was considered the WOG. But is it the WOG when it gets recorded in writing? Or do such writings become a testimony that WOG that was spoken at one time by a prophet? This is probably the only text that can be stretched to fit. Right? And even then, it would only apply to the OT, not the NT writings or the whole Bible (which did not exist at that time). I love the Bible, especially the NT. Studied it in painful detail over the past 40 years. But, it seems smart to be real about it, and tell folks the whole truth. I was not told everything! But I do now. I believe people are better off, as I am, placing their trust squarely where it belongs... in God himself, thru the HS, not in writings, helpful as they are. Someone recently told me I do

not believe in the Bible. At first, I objected (my upbringing kicking in), then I realized that I believe the bible, but do not believe IN it! I believe IN God. Big difference. I reserve that kind of trust for God alone.

Andy (11:14 AM)

Paul refers to the "Law" before this. He's equating the Law with the word of God. I appreciate your view and agree in large part but please read that 1 Corinthians 14 passage if you haven't already.

Ric (11:19 AM)

I have. As I said... not much basis, if any. Context is king! But the Bible as a whole no way. Man-made idea. But it seems ok to call the Bible WOG since it is a record that contains the messages of, and about, the Word of God who is Jesus. Just trying to keep it all real... like Viola does!

Andy (11:29 AM)

My point in referring to that passage is to show that there's at least an instance of the expression "word of God" being applied to Bible content. In the 1 Corinthians 14 instance it's referring to the Law. Admittedly, it's not referring to the whole Old Testament there and neither to the New Testament.

Ric (11:49 AM)

All true, and should not be dismissed! Thanks. And certainly WOG was applied (loosely) to the OT. But it is these same "writings" (OT) that Jesus warned not to find salvation in (believing in them). Salvation is only found in a person.... Him. And, the Bible, (as an official collection of writings), was not, and could not be called WOG by Jesus and apostles. It did not exist until nearly 400 AD! So why do we call the Bible the Word of God? Tradition! Again, I don't mind, except that writings can easily become a replacement, or equal with, God. It is popular to say "the bible speaks to me." But a book cannot speak or communicate. Such speaking can only be of themselves, or of the Holy Spirit speaking to them. Probably, usually, both. But this makes my point of "Holy Spirit vs Holy Bible". Stick with the only source we know to be truly inerrant. The HS.

Rob (4:34 PM)

If the Law was God's word, why was it discarded? And if the NT is God's word, why does it not teach everyone the same thing? Jesus said he was going to send another (a person) to teach us. When I turned to the HS for my instruction, my whole inner world was turned upside down into reality!!!

Andy (4:44 PM)

If you're suggesting that the Law wasn't God's word, then you're going to have to take that up with Paul who equated the two. See 1Corinthians 14:34&36.

Rob (4:47 PM)

Andy, verse 34 says that women should remain silent in the church, and that is the law! I know your wife, and she will never go for that! Ha! And I agree with her. She speaks right up, and I am always glad when she does. I know you are too! I think this says something about being careful how we read the Bible and how much of a final authority we make it in comparison to the Holy Spirit who is, for sure, inerrant.

Rob (5:51 PM)

Andy, If God is the same yesterday, today and forever? Then why was the Law nailed to the cross and grace became the expression of God, which in my not so humble opinion, has always been His modus operandi!

Andy (6:26 PM)

Rob, I'll take your shift into another direction, as a concession to defeat. Regarding your reference to Colossians 2*, you're not understanding Paul correctly. The "law" wasn't nailed to the cross. Notice what Paul actually says what was nailed to the cross ... "the record of debts that stood against us." In other words, our "sin" was nailed to the cross.

* Col 2:13-14 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Ric (7:19 PM)

Andy, as I agreed, the OT writings can be loosely referred as God's Word. But this is probably the only place in the NT. Right? It still seems like extremely weak justification for calling the whole Bible the Word of God. But, again, I do not mind if people do, and perhaps it is! I just hesitate to conclude this, for lack of support. But if someone feels God has told them that this collection of ancient writings is the Word of God, then I fully respect their personal conclusion from God. It just seems like it cannot be made a factually provable thing, unlike other things that can be clearly demonstrated in the NT.

Andy (7:56 PM)

It probably is the only place (the 1 Corinthians 14 passage) where the expression "word of God" clearly refers to Bible content. I think I'm pretty much in agreement with you on that whole matter. My most recent response was a correction to a common misunderstanding about the law being nailed to the cross. What was nailed to the cross was our "record of debt," that is, our sin.

Ric (8:57 PM)

And you "nailed it" on that one! Good eye, Andy.

Rob (9:30 PM)

So apparently the Law is extended to today, and a combo of grace and Law is our horror to figure out which one prevails at any given time!

----- Thursday, Jun 24, 2021 -----

Ric (6:36 AM)

Jesus said he came to fulfill the law, not abolish it. We are clearly “under grace not law”, according to Paul. And, the law itself is holy, righteous and good, yet no one will be justified by it.... according to Paul. Pretty clear what the law can, and cannot do.

Andy (8:37 AM)

The Lord said that He would put his law in his people's hearts and forgive their iniquities in the new covenant promise found in Jeremiah 31:31-34*. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus' words at the last supper in Luke 22:19&20** and parallel passages. Everyone in the new covenant has the law in his or her heart. The question under debate is which ones. Most interpreters divide (though there's no such distinction in the OT) the Old Testament laws into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories. Most will say that the moral laws have been brought forward into the new covenant and are binding on its members. Others will say that all Old Testament laws which can be carried out today are included in the new covenant. Herein lies the debate... does the promised new covenant which Jesus inaugurated include only the moral laws or does it include additional laws along with them? One thing is for sure, the new covenant (of which Christians are members of), is not without any law at all. There are commands to be kept. Again, the question is, which ones?

* Jer 31:31-34 Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will

** Luke 22:19&20 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Ric (8:43 AM)

Good questions! It may be as simple as ... the whole law can be summed up (not set aside) by: love God and love your neighbor in Rom 7:4-6*. Seems easy for many religious people to slam the law to either extreme... legalism or antinomianism (anti-law). Andy... when you visiting again?

** Rom 7:4-6 So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. When we were controlled by our old nature, sinful desires were at work within us, and the law aroused these evil desires that produced a harvest of sinful deeds, resulting in death. But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit. -

Andy (8:49 AM)

I'm coming up later today.

Ric (8:49 AM)

Any free time, let me know!

Andy (8:50 AM)

Will do.

Ric (8:58 AM)

A book I just read, *Hunting for the Word of God*, turned out to be a great and honest resource. Here is contents:

1. A Preserved New Testament?
2. The History Of The N.T.
3. Text Restoration of the Original Text: A Mere Deceptive Claim
4. Why We Cannot Trust the Greek Manuscripts
5. Why We Cannot Trust the New Testament Versions
6. Can We Really Restore the Original New Testament through Patristic Citations?
7. Can the Witnesses Sustain Each Other?
8. An Ambitious goal and an Early Fail
9. "But That Does Not Affect the N.T. Reliability and Message!"

Then he goes and does all this analysis to the Koran. You will never get this kind of objectivity at any church! The author is a Muslim, educated in US. I no longer evaluate books by their cover, author, or credentials... though I weigh these factors carefully. Instead, I evaluate all sources by the content itself, and to what degree it can be confirmed. I've been burned, when I was young, by "Christian" sources. Some of them are terribly dishonest, or maybe just uninformed. This does not make Christian sources wrong. I have also found many to be intellectually honest. My test applies equally to all! The question is: Do we want the truth at all cost, or just information that agrees with what we already believe and makes us comfortable? It is a difficult journey, but a worthy one, a brave one, and a lonely one. But well worth it. My faith has only grown because of such a journey!

Andy (2:39 PM)

I agree that anyone can present truth, because truth lies outside of ourselves, but I'd personally be especially cautious in receiving textual criticism facts or scriptural truth from one who denies the Gospel. Muslims don't believe that it was Jesus who died on the cross and thus they certainly don't believe that he rose from the dead.

Ric (4:18 PM)

A Muslim is just as capable of presenting factual historical information as a Christian, a Jewish, or atheist. In fact, Christians don't have the best track record for intellectual honesty and accuracy...especially the pop guys like McArthur and host of others who are really not scholars. But you are right about being careful accepting anyone's opinions and conclusions and beliefs they hold about that factual info. But this caution may apply to Christians as well. They do plenty of heart-felt speculation, as do others. I quit, a long time ago, reading books to obtain my beliefs. Frankly, I trust no-one blindly. I always want to know

what the basis is for what they write, and find a means, if any, to confirm their claims. This takes time and is not easy. But I have found that usually all the info I need to confirm is already out there, and is usually found in an opposing work. I am now reading a textual criticism book by an evangelical. I doubt he will not have anything new for me, since I was thoroughly schooled in this many years ago by Norm Geisler at seminary. And, as I have discovered over the years, they did not tell me everything. The facts presented were true, but cherry picked. When all the facts are presented, as this Muslim guy does, a much clearer and more accurate picture develops. This Muslim guy seems to have the same info Ehrman presented. But I have also looked at Daniel Wallace's work (the main Greek guy at Seminary), and the debate between him and Ehrman. Most enlightening!

----- Sunday, Jun 27, 2021 -----

Rob (5:29 PM)

It has become clear to me that Christians, by and large, are very dishonest in the main. They refuse to search or acknowledge new information or findings that disagree with their positions. Cognitive dissonance is rampant. Hell is a perfect example. Folks prefer to believe Augustine and the Catholic Church rather than facts. Fortunately for them, God does not take how they presentation Him to the world, personally!

Ric (5:34 PM)

That is the "glass half empty" view. And it can be applied to any group of people in some shape or form. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Rob (5:42 PM)

No, it is really saying the glass is empty! Jesus spoke to neither hot nor cold -- that's Christianity! They make God out to be a tyrant, and egotistical at that!

Ric (5:51 PM)

Love also need not be angry toward fellow believers. None of the fellow believers I know are empty. Just flawed, like all of us.

Perry (7:46 PM)

Rob, I don't know how you have been hurt. But hurt expressed today, came out of the blue. My church's sermon today was on Mark 4 and 5. It draws from Isaiah and Ezekiel. The sermon will be on our website Monday afternoon. Check it out. What you appear to think, could be no further away from the truth.

Ric (7:50 PM)

Rob's ideas could not be further away from truth? Far as possible? Really?

Why such extreme? You speak in Hyperbole? I will take a listen! Maybe Rob will too.

Perry (7:59 PM)

"They make God to be a tyrant or egotistical"? That's pretty far away from the truth. As a general statement, you guys make some wild statements. And if nobody challenges it, and you build off of it, further drifting into left field. Yikes!

Ric (7:50 PM)

Perry, careful with "you guys". We all disagree on many things. General lumping of people is usually not a good idea. And, nobody challenges? You are doing a pretty darn good job, bro! Keep it up. No complaining! Ha!

Rob (8:23 PM)

Anyone who says God created an eternal torture pit for merely not believing in Him has slandered Him to the max as an egotistical tyrant! Some folks have said to me that they were counting on Jesus to protect them from the Father! As a father, none of you guys would ever do that to your children no matter what they would do! Yet, God who is love would do that in total contradiction to 1Cor 13? You hold yourselves up to be better lovers of your children than God is of his. But God, whose essence is love and who you denigrate, still loves you in spite of your callous view of Him! And I love you in the same manner He does no matter what you may think of me. I love you, but I hate your doctrines that elevate you above the many others you deem worthy to burn forever and ever, and ever, and ever, etc. I never forget that I was once a devotee of your same doctrines. I do not claim ignorance as an excuse, nor do I claim to have discovered the truth by myself. But you might want to consider that I have been on both sides of this matter, and you ... apparently only on one. You might ask yourselves, which is the greater judge -- the one who punishes the guilty or the one who restores both the guilty and the victim. Hopefully you will one day see you are both guilty and victim! So am I !!!

Ric (8:35 PM)

I agree, Perry, that is pretty far! Perhaps rightly so? And your argument, Rob, seems mostly reasonable to me. A few disagreements, but it does not matter. It's yours and I'm behind you believing it because you are my equal, and I am yours, and you are addressing things unseen and haven't happened yet things you cannot prove, except to yourself. So no problem on my part with you, or Perry! And Alan has yet another view, and I'm fully ok with him. No need for anger against him, or his doctrine. Rob, Alan and I just had a great lunch discussion over this stuff Friday. Could not have been a sweeter exchange between brothers. Our love for each other really requires no angry speech or accusations on the part of any of us. We are fully ready for next lunch with great expectations and love galore. It is the "1Cor 13" way to go! Perry and I will be doing the same soon. Andy and I just did this kind of exchange on Saturday, at Pete's Coffee, with another brother ... and it was sweet! Plenty of disagreement, but even more love. No anger toward people or doctrine!

Rob (8:52 PM)

I have no need to prove it! I know it and I proclaim it, and if anyone hears that is the job of the HS! If She can't get the job done, it's not on me! I am free to proclaim, or not. But the truth is so compelling my mouth

just won't be still! All anyone has to do, is get away from me or ask me to get away from them. None are my responsibility!

Andy (8:52 PM)

Though I don't hold your universalist position Rob, I must say that parent/child analogy is a hard one to rebut.

Roy (8:55 PM)

First Corinthians 13:4-8 describes God's love for everyone. If ignorant believers want to add eternal punishment to these unconditional attributes of God then they walk into risky ground of Heretical belief. TRADITIONAL, brainwashed believers are afraid to love a God like that. Their preconceived repetitive justice must be carried out on all ignorant humanity, including their own family members. People with this point of view lack love and compassion. Good luck with that ignorant thinking.

Ric (9:21 PM)

Perry.... I'm retired after Thursday. I'm all yours, anytime you want to chat. Always a joy for me on your back deck! I have enjoyed respectful and loving exchanges with you for six years now! Lets not stop.

Rob (9:37 PM)

Andy, if you continue to be open enough to even give that argument any space in your thinking, you will soon be a person who believes God is really, really good. If there is no darkness in Jesus, then it follows there can be no darkness in the Father! And anything less than all goodness is not light, then what kind of good and loving God could come up with anything less than life eternal for all humanity? The cross was The Trinity's apology for allowing us to become the bastards that we are in the flesh, in order to demonstrate how much they love us beyond our hatred for them! We killed God in the flesh, and they gave us new life so that we could love ourselves and love them. God So loved sinners that He gave Jesus --- to bad people!!!

Ric (9:43 PM)

Funny, the Pharisees largely believed gehenna was a place of 12 months of punishment. A few believed it was everlasting. Another few believed it was everlasting but only in extreme cases, such as the Hitlers of their day. The Jews invented gehenna (as a "metaphysical place of torment") during the time period between the two testaments,. And they did so with no real basis from OT (where gehenna is just a location on earth.) Gehenna did not come from Jesus, and he never endorsed their manufactured idea of it. He only referred to THEIR concept of it as a way to teach them in terms they can understand. He even called them "sons of gehenna". Why? It's ironic that Christianity ascribes gehenna to Jesus. No one ever looks into this, and when I show them ... they reject the facts. Fudge does a great job of laying this all out in his book. Bart Ehrman does also in his book on hell. There are many others who do so, also. I've never seen anyone even try to refute any of this, point by point. They just appeal to tradition back to Augustine and the RC church!

----- Monday, Jun 28, 2021 -----

Perry (12:48 AM)

When you guys use the parent/child analogy, please don't make God to be a human. He is beyond human comparison. Divine Justice! That's our "rub" point. You guys all like the book "The Shack". Even in that fictional novel, after Jesus helped Mac walk across water to the place of wisdom where Mac met the Holy Spirit, Jesus tells Mac (I'm paraphrasing): "God doesn't want zombies or slaves responding to Him. Love doesn't force. Not everyone wants to respond." In Eph 2:14 & 15, Jesus bridged the gap between Jews and Gentiles. The work is done by Him, but not all respond to this good news. Love doesn't force and free will is always allowed for those who choose to not have a relationship with God. Go see the rich man who never fed Lazarus. Go read about the great wedding feast. Go read about those who did not have oil in their lamps. Jesus is tender wisdom, but He never deviates from the truth.

Andy (7:41 AM)

Perry, perhaps you used "all" generically, because the shack didn't appeal to me. Regarding the parent/child analogy, I too believe there's a "rub" against scriptural statements. But if being created in God's image means that we receive, among other things, our capacity to love like God does, then I do see something of a connection between our ability to love our children and God loving his creation. I personally see it referring to our being given dominion over God's creation.

Perry (7:43 AM)

Universal restoration heavily relies on that analogy to the exclusion of Bible verses. That's a problem.

Rob (7:59 AM)

Are all forgiven? Was the rich man forgiven? Did Jesus teach the Law and even expand it pre-cross? Are not law and grace exclusive? Is one saved by keeping the law? Law and grace are exclusive, or should Ephesians 2 be read: "for by grace and the law are we saved"? So, what it comes down to is that we are saved either by works or by grace. If believing is required, then believing is a "work". If that were true, then I would agree with you. You have combined grace and law. But grace and law are antithetical, and so you have a problem. In this life, a person's ability to love God and his fellowman is limited to his view of God! The view of God in Evangelical Christianity makes Him out to be a sadistic, narcissistic demon and brother to Satan -- Satan dressed in fig leaves! Your view makes sin to be greater than grace, and makes God to be a second-rate deliverer (since your view is that only a few will be saved)! Viva la Satanus! Perry, what do you do with Bible verses that do not align with provisional salvation, like 2Cor 5:19?

Ric (9:31 AM)

Rob, maybe we can grab coffee tomorrow. Lots to talk about all this, in love. Anyone else is welcome too.... except Andy. He would have to drive too far! Ha!

Perry (12:24 PM)

Rob, I love that verse. It's available to all. It's a gift. But a gift is not really a gift until it is received. So, each of us has free will to accept it with a repentant heart. Answer God's call, then God takes over. Then we get to bask in the glory of verses like 2Cor 5:19. Rob, in your long text above, I simply can't follow whatever it

is you are trying to express. Somewhere in that puddle, though, I believe you asked a question about law and grace being exclusive. Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. In the law, the whole world is held accountable to God. I was held captive under the law. The law was my guardian, but then I came to Jesus. The Father made His Son to be sin for my sake -- Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for me. His blood washed me clean ... Justified. I was dead in sin, in the old Adam. I'm now reconciled to God. So go to Rom 8:3-4. God did what the law could not do for me. I don't deserve it, but with much gratitude, I hungrily accept it. Grace! Now, what is it you are trying to say about law and grace being exclusive?

----- Tuesday, Jun 29, 2021 -----

Rob (3:35 PM)

Funny how a very plain statement is twisted to fit a doctrine. Also funny, is how a gift isn't a gift unless it's accepted.

Ric (3:40 PM)

Alan and I had a great talk today, during coffee, about all this stuff. Here is what I sent him: Good talk, bro. I think we are 90% in agreement, and the other 10 is not a problem. In fact, if we do NOT disagree some one or both of us has a problem! Ha! Like Walter Martin once said, "if two people think exactly the same, one of them is not thinking". But let's keep comparing notes and learn from each other! And I think I can honestly say that about any of you in this text group. To me you are all trusted and loved brothers in Jesus!

Perry (3:42 PM)

I twisted nothing. And no, it's not funny. A gift is not a gift until it is accepted. Guys, start a new thread And leave me off!

Ric (3:45 PM)

I will do that, Perry. Sorry to see you leave. You have been a worthy contributor, and you express your beliefs very soundly! Love you, bro. Let's talk on your deck some time... when it gets cool! Ha! Guys. Do not use this thread. Please delete it. I will start a new one with just the five of us. Thanks!

Rob (3:48 PM)

Perry, I would say I'm sorry if I offended you, but that would be a lie. I am only sorry that discussion is something that offends you. I like discussion, even in disagreement, as long as it is done in love. I love you, Perry, no matter what!

Perry (3:49 PM)

Gift -- legal definition of gift

<https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/gift>

Ric (3:49 PM)

Guys, lets please delete this thread. Respect Perry's request. I started a new one. Thanks. Perry, if you want to exit this thread, you need to delete it on your end. You and Rob can start your own new one, if you want.

Perry (6:15 PM)

Let me exit with a thought. Those songs we sing at church? They pretty much all support you guys. We sing them, but then go out believing in eternal punishment. That would be the question I would ask: Why do you sing one thing, then preach something different? I'm personally tossed up. Who is the greatest Christian singer? Johnny Cash, then Bob Dylan. What society calls a "Christian singer" doesn't hold a match to those guys. Journey well, my friends!

Rob (6:27 PM)

Two great questions, Perry.

Perry (6:31 PM)

Can we have just one Christian singer, sing a song about eternal punishment? Apparently not. Why? It's too horrible to think about. But we preach it!

Ric (6:35 PM)

Perry.... do you want to end this thread or not? It was requested by you, and I honored your request. You need to decide. You have engaging thoughts. They are appreciated. But you cannot request to get off a group text, then stay on. This is the 2nd time you have requested this. We are happy to accommodate you, but also happy to engage with you in love! You need to decide, my friend. And whatever you decide... we will honor! Love ya, bro!

Perry (6:45 PM)

I don't want to antagonize anyone. I don't want to be riding on a hamster wheel. My thoughts are different from yours, as a general statement. So let me exit. My point was simple. Don't use the "human father loving his son, no matter what", because on a Divine level, Justice goes further. What I would ask is: Why do modern Christians sing the songs they do? Why would a preacher be reluctant to do an extensive examination of the book of Revelation from the pulpit? How can the message be misunderstood to the point of not even trying to tackle it? What we infer, in preaching around it, is too horrible to think about. Remove me, unless you overwhelmingly want me to stay in. But I'm harsh and direct. So, not wanting me to stay is quite ok.

Ric (6:48 PM)

Perry, no one has asked you to leave the discussion. That was solely your idea. You are loved and welcome here, harsh, direct, and anything else. We only ask that you communicate in love. We do not pull our punches here, but we do not deliver death blows or cheap shots, either. I am sure I speak for the others in saying, please stay. You are loved and appreciated just as you are. This is what unconditional love is, and it is how God loves us!

Rob (6:53 PM)

I hate to tell you this, Perry, but now you are sounding like me and describing me! Knock it off -- HA! I thought it was me that Perry was trying to get rid of! We need a face-to-face meeting! I'll buy breakfast or lunch for any who will show up, anytime!

Perry (6:55 PM)

Ok, I'm taking a brother to UCSF tomorrow for medical treatment. Maybe next week. Tuesday?

Rob (6:57 PM)

Works for me. You name time and place.

Perry (6:58 PM)

Burger place near the radio station, Tuesday at 11:30? I'll be sweaty, but in rare form,

Rob (7:00 PM)

Is that the hamburger place? Sweaty from golf?

Perry (7:03 PM)

Tennis. Yes, Heisenburger. I can feel my arteries clogging up just thinking about it

Rob (7:06 PM)

You make me tired thinking about your schedule.

Perry (7:08 PM)

Didn't want to mention it, but I start pickle ball at 8am and switch to tennis at 10. Usually I go do Hospital visits at 11:30. But for you, I will forego it and head straight to Heisenburger.

Ric (7:09 PM)

Perry... I assume you are staying with us on this group text?

Rob (7:10 PM)

I am honored!

Perry (7:22 PM)

I simply don't want to be a downer. I'm Jesuit educated. Hans Kung is my poster child. Karl Barth said, "Hans Kung says what I mean in my books better than I do!" But, I agreed to uphold my church teaching statements and doctrines. So I can't deviate in these texts we are having. But on the OT ...Yeah, It's confusing. But I will not deviate from my church teaching statements. If that's a problem on this thread, then I should depart. You guys are doing the same thing as me. You want to glorify God, go out and make disciples of all nations. How could I ever be upset with any of you???

Rob (7:26 PM)

Ah! A closet thinker!

Ric (7:34 PM)

You are free to deviate as you feel you should, here, with us! No creed or doctrinal statement is binding on us. None of us have, or would, require you to depart for what you honestly believe to be true. Personally, I support you in doing so, even though I disagree. Disagreeing does not require me to be opposed to you! Nor does it require me to try to change what you believe. I just share what I believe, with passion and let God take it from there! We are governed by God himself, each one of us as believer-priests, going boldly before the throne of grace where Jesus our brother and best friend is seated.

----- Friday, Jul 2, 2021 -----

Ric (4:34 AM)

Guys this has turned out to be a good book: Searching for Jesus: New Discoveries in the Quest for Jesus of Nazareth---and How They Confirm the Gospel Accounts*. Hutchinson is one of those rare intellectually honest Christian writers. He is on the positive side of evaluating Christianity (actually the historic Jesus), but he also acknowledges all the problems that exist. One of my "KJV only" friends recommended it. Go figure!

*https://www.amazon.com/dp/0718018303/ref=cm_sw_r_em_apglt_fabc_B3ZVGH78NY6KEADN GGC1

Perry (7:06 AM)

No, it figures quite well. Finally ... A human author really worth reading! They seem few and far between lately. This is one I would be willing to read, with others to discuss it. I think Rob and I are meeting for lunch Tuesday! Consider 1Peter 2:8. What does it reveal? But if anyone wants to go into a Hutchinson discussion ... I'm in.

Ric (7:21 PM)

Let me know when you figure out 2Peter. We can talk Hutch , or anything else, any time. Always a joy. I'm retired. Look out!

Perry (7:23 PM)

Ready to talk about 2Peter ,

Ric (7:24 PM)

Always. But that book was not a favorite of Luther! He did not like Jude, Revelation and James, either. Alan and I had lunch today. It was all about how to do "church" well. No doctrine. That's for another day. Nice change of pace! I'm watching James Bond re-runs tonight! Another change of pace. Trying to find the hidden meaning! Ha!

Roy (7:41 PM)

I always liked the first James Bond.

Ric (7:46 PM)

Sean!

Roy (7:48 PM)

Yep!

Ric (7:48 PM)

Hard to beat. I was an impressionable teen-ager at that time! Helped shape my view of manhood! Ha! Is 2Peter "Apocalyptic Literature", or just straight talk about the future?

Rob (8:28 PM)

All I know is that Jesus had to clue Paul in to get the disciples on track!

Roy (8:39 PM)

We would not have a clear understanding of grace and salvation if Paul hadn't explained it.

Chapter Three

Was Paul the founder of Christianity?

Ric (7:30 AM)

Jesus did not do a good enough job? Many people believe Paul was the founder of "Christianity", not Jesus.

Perry (8:11 AM)

Jesus did just fine. I give thanks to Him. And Paul is pretty firm about those who choose not to accept the gift of Christ's blood. Roy, What you are referring to as grace and salvation?

Rob (8:14 AM)

Jesus taught law, but said what he was going to do. Mostly it was in riddles. The Pharisees couldn't handle his accusations and portrayals of them. The disciples were around him constantly and they didn't get it! They were into a combo of law and grace! Jesus grabbed the greatest law man (Paul), turned him around, and made him the greatest grace man ever! The contrast is absolutely against human comprehension on the surface, but brilliant by divine thinking! And then the coup de gras is for humans to be the purveyors of the gospel, only to have them become abject failures just like the Jews were before Christ! You may dismiss my thoughts, but you just might question my experience and discover I've been on both sides of law and grace. Like water and oil, they don't mix! Law says there is still something to do; Grace says DONE ... in and by Jesus Christ. For the whole cosmos! Love y'all.

Ric (8:17 AM)

Amen, Perry. I give thanks to Jesus alone! He is my focus. But still it appears that Paul, not Jesus founded "Christianity" (he just based it on the person and work of Jesus). The question is whether God was in this (Paul going beyond Jesus) or whether this was "Paulian zeal"? Many Christians trust Paul for most of their of doctrine. Perhaps rightly so. For many, Paul is their main teacher, not Jesus. Jesus is the savior, Paul is the teacher?

Perry (8:19 AM)

As a young adult, had I "hung" with Jesus, I wouldn't have understood Him either, despite the miracles. Now, Rob, you've experienced legalism. That's sad. So, I'll give you a wide berth. But be careful ... Jesus is our Savior and Teacher! Know Him; Know God.

Ric (8:20 AM)

Amen, Perry!

Perry (8:23 AM)

Jesus spent a good dozen years with Paul in seclusion explaining OT in a way Paul never before understood. Paul would be shaking his head at you guys!

Rob (8:24 AM)

Agreed!

Ric (8:24 AM)

How do you know Paul spent a dozen years with Jesus? By faith? Paul is probably shaking his head at a whole lot of things! And probably chuckling too.

Perry (8:37 AM)

Chronologically, there are over a dozen years of Paul's life unaccounted for. He was in the cave, being taught by the Master!

Ric (8:38 AM)

That is how you KNOW this? I do not see this kind of detail presented in the NT.

Perry (8:38 AM)

You want to know Christ's ministry? Go to David and the Psalms. Jesus explained it to David, and David presented it the Psalms.

Ric (8:38 AM)

The 12-year -gap argument seems like weak proof, Perry. Psalms... a little better.

Perry (8:39 AM)

What are you trying to say? That Saul's conversion and total understanding was instantaneous? Talk about weak!

Ric (8:41 AM)

I'm not saying anything. I'm asking. How do you KNOW Paul spent all those years with Jesus? He could have, but there is no evidence that he did. Is there? This is yet more tradition coming down to us as fact.

Perry (8:42 AM)

I'm getting off the hamster wheel. Got pickle ball and golf to play.

Ric (8:43 AM)

Enjoy! I guess when the questions get tough ... go do sports. Think while playing! Just asking good questions gets a person in trouble, especially at church where you would think questions would be welcome. But it depends on the questions ... and perhaps the questioner. Think seriously about this question. It is a good one. We are all free to do what we want in life. And this is the point. "If the son sets you free, you are free indeed".... to play pickle ball! Ha! Religion (not God, not Jesus) brings bondage. Oh, it is so good to be free! Enjoy the game. Not a hamster wheel for me, Perry, but a grand and wonderful journey that you and I have traveled for six years now. I have learned a great deal and am a better man for it. I've enjoyed each step. Thanks for being a faithful friend. You are 1 in 300 to me, at any church!

Rob (9:14 AM)

I see what Perry sees in Jesus teaching Paul face to face. I've never understood why it's not taught! Pretty clear to me that's what he claims!

Ric (9:26 AM)

Could be, Rob, but there is no direct evidence, unlike many other things in NT. Just conjecture outside of the NT. Does this matter? Seems like a lot hinges on it. A good Jesuit never stops asking questions. He just takes a break and plays pickle ball! Ha! I take it back, Paul is not the founder of Christianity ... Constantine and Augie were!

Rob (10:19 AM)

That's because I called him on it. I should have gone to play pickle ball with you. Ric is driving me nuts!

Ric (10:20 AM)

Finally, I've succeeded!

Perry (12:32 PM)

The Preparation of Paul: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-preparation-of-paul/>

Ric (1:08 PM)

Thanks! I will take a look. But keep in mind that any NT direct claims are weak, at best. So, most support comes from "the implication is...", as Rob argued this morning at coffee. And as I told him, that's all it is... implications. Not much to hang dogma on! Nice writeup by the Ligonier folks. Spells out what is implied, quite well. Now... how reliable is this reported NT info, that has come down to us through translation, copying, and a 150 year gap after the original writings (except for a few fragments)? This is an important and relevant question for those who claim that biblical writings are their final authority. I like Ligonier Ministries! RC Sproul was always one of my favorites. He did a great series on thinking logically and rationally. I never forgot it. How, about we seek less religion (writings, creeds, doctrine, arguments, proof texts), and seek more relationship (love, tolerance, holy spirit, unity, spiritual life)?

Perry (2:04 PM)

Ok, back from pickle ball and golf. Now, where do you get this craziness that NT direct claims are weak at best. Are you really going to say that to God on Judgement day? Wash your mouth out with soap and water. Ric, either the Bible is the inspired word of God, or not! The Bible is infallible, or not! Jesus ... either He is right, or wrong ... or a maniac. Choices! What the heck are you doing with your life? Oh, by the way, Jesuits are not about questioning, they are about listening. For 6 years I've been listening to you, Ric. Now, I need to speak up. Where is Thomas Aquinas when I need him? No reference to Jesuit. How long do I listen until I bang the table top ... which Aquinas did, when he came up with a response to Manichaeism. Seek the Bible. Put aside human authors. Especially those dismissed by their seminaries and universities!

Ric (3:27 PM)

You have made huge leaps, bro. I am just asking good questions. And you have asked many good ones above. Let's talk live, as we have so many time. Texting has limits.

Rob (3:40 PM)

My gauge is "does it set me free and free indeed?" I have lots of experience being in bondage and being set free.

Andy (3:46 PM)

Abiding in Jesus' word does indeed set us free.

Rob (3:58 PM)

Abiding (resting) in Jesus, is possible because we are free ... it is our privilege. Our problem is that we are easily distracted and captured by false teaching that appeals to the flesh. The flesh wants to do what Jesus already did. I know -- for if there was a degree for being an expert at trying to be Jesus, it would be mine! Gave that up for lent! Ha!

Ric (4:07 PM)

Good gage Rob! Hard to beat. Prob more certainty in that than "the bible tells me so", even though that is good too. The Bible just does not seem to have the credibility to be the final authority. That can only come from God himself! How could it really be found anywhere else? All other things, and people, are only "peripheral help" to the "real thing" ... God himself!

Andy (4:12 PM)

I agree that we rest in Jesus, but resting in Jesus isn't what Jesus says right before he speaks of being free. Notice the conditionality of abiding (that is, continuing in) Jesus' "word." The "word" Jesus is speaking of here is his teachings. (If Jesus was merely referring to himself, he would have said if you abide in "me." He didn't though. He said if you abide in my "word.") Jesus is speaking here to believing Jews who are entwined with man-made teachings/traditions. Jesus is telling them that if they abide, or continue in his teaching, they'll truly be free. Free of what? Free from man-made teachings/traditions. Here those verses: So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32).

Rob (4:21 PM)

That is pre-cross teaching, Andy. Post-cross, we are in him and he is in us. Jesus is the word. Abiding is optional -- indwelling is permanent!

Andy (4:27 PM)

If it's pre-cross and thus irrelevant (I hope that's not what you're intending to communicate), then why do you use that passage at all for your theological understanding? You should just discard it. If you choose to use it however, then you should strive to interpret it in its context. Its context is that which was explained above.

Ric (4:37 PM)

Well said, Andy ... abiding is the key, for sure! And if we don't? What then? Was Jesus giving a threat, or a promise? If a threat, then we better get on with trying harder. If a promise, then we can expect the HS to do his special and powerful work in us... all in due time... by grace!

Rob (4:40 PM)

I think "shall know" is the operative phrase there. Future tense when the Word would become internal. The written word that we have today is suspect in the various translations and we don't even have the original writings. Then you also have the disparity of the Law, Jesus' pre-cross teachings, and post-cross teachings by Paul and others. So, the truth (understanding) must come from inside! I'm taking my bride to dinner -- you all will have to wait till later for my additional words of wisdom. No arrogance in me! Ha!

Andy (5:09 PM)


Jesus was giving a promise. The converse though could be seen as a threat. If anyone doesn't abide in Christ, they'll not experience true freedom. Let me restate that last sentence: If anyone doesn't abide in Jesus' word/teaching, they'll not experience true freedom.

Perry (5:22 PM)

Ok Rob, you previously were in a legalistic church. Correct? Legalists continue to live under the law. A legalist believes that God's approval is dependent on their right conduct. Gal 3:3, legalism is destructive to the gospel. Rom 3:23 and Gal 3:10. Ok? Through the gospel, I'm aware of my disobedience to God's law. But, also, the gospel frees me from the curse of the law. Good news! God forgives me if I turn to Jesus. (Gal 3:13-14, Rom 5:5) God's love for me. (John 17:26). So here it is guys: I obey God's law, not out of obligation, but out of love. Love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom 13:10). Legalism is self-centered. Sorry you went through it, Rob. Legalism is not concerned with delight in God, or His law, but with self. (Rom 10:4). The point of the law is to drive me to Jesus. Every command in scripture points me to Jesus. Jesus fulfills that command.

----- Sunday, Jul 4, 2021 -----

Ric (8:27 AM)

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Ahhhh... freedom! Coffee at my favorite coffee shop this fine morning. Good to know we have freedom in the public square, to question and express opinions without corrective action. What a concept. God loves it too. Enjoys yours! Andy... I am looking for the major players in Biblical Textual Criticism. I now have lots of time, and I plan to fully explore this just as I have so many other things in the past 40 years. Doing this kind of thing is one of my favorite pass-times. It's like reading a "who done it" novel, but better, because it is real! I have come across several Textual Criticism organizations, this past year. I want both the secular and faith-based organizations. I do not trust either by themselves! Both are biased, and the only way to sort out the truth is by reading both. Man, I sure learned this in my study of theology over the past 40 years! Daniel Wallace has an org. I can find that one easy. Any others you know of? Thanks. Gonna be a fun study! It's the kind of unbridled study and discussion that is never allowed at church. Thank God for

our freedom. If I lived in middle-ages, I would either "fat, dumb and happy", or I would be placed in shackles in the public square! Ha! I'm really glad America is not run by religious zealots! It just has a lot of them. But that, too, is part of freedom.

Rob (1:16 PM)

Ric, it is like the middle ages, in some ways! And what's wrong with fat, dumb and happy! Ha! Perry, I love ya anyway, even if you do denigrate me! Yes, a legalist I was, but I do not regret it. My appreciation of grace is enhanced because of it. No one appreciates freedom as much as someone who has been imprisoned! However, that does not excuse those who cause the bondage. And I will fight against it as long as I have breath! I do deny, indeed, that the law points to obedience or love. The law causes one to focus on his failures, or on his compliance -- his sinner-hood or his self-righteousness!

Roy (2:00 PM)

Good radio program today guys.

Ric (2:06 PM)

I got good feedback from a listener. I will be off the show for the next 4 weeks. I hope to be back on as a guest, in Aug, if I am invited by Rob and Roy. Maybe someday we can educate Christians. The churches are not doing it very much. Mostly, they "indoctrinate". But that's ok, because this is their mission (to protect an assumed correct doctrinal statement, not to seek the truth at all cost). Someone needs to bring them ALL the facts (not just some), so they can have a shot at doing what Paul exhorted the church to do... examine EVERYTHING carefully!

Rob (2:43 PM)

Ric, you are always invited to be a guest on our show ... the same as anyone else ... even Perry! He's the best and most loveable heretic I know!!!

Ric (3:10 PM)

Perry would be great guest. Choose him over me, any day! You NEED a real "Jesuit" on the show, not a honorary one like me! (Perry made me an "honorary Jesuit" a few years ago. It was a proud day!).

Rob (3:12 PM)

Plays fast and loose with his honorariums, doesn't he?

Ric (3:22 PM)

Thankfully... yes! He did not grant it for any brilliance in me, though there is little! Instead, it was because I ask a lot of questions. I am, still, on the three upcoming July radio shows that we recorded. They went very well, as I recall. I will listen to them ahead of time, now that we have the recordings available. Funny ... it is easy to forget what we all said, after we have recorded.

Roy (4:54 PM)

Let me know what you thought are about the shows. I heard a pastor say today that the "mind of Christ" is only the Bible. He would probably disagree with us.

Rob (6:24 PM)

Which translation and which testament of the Bible is “the mind of Christ”?

Ric (6:30 PM)

We could use that as an opening quote sometime, anonymously. Hey.... invite him on the show!

Roy (7:02 PM)

It's the guy who comes on right before us!

Rob (7:05 PM)

Ha! And he's a old friend of mine! Well ... he used to be, before I jumped ship!

Andy (7:31 PM)

Ric, I'm not aware of any textual criticism organizations. I don't think you're much of a FB user, but I'm sure there are textual criticism groups on it.

Alan (7:53 PM)

You can audit classes at seminaries. That's always an option.

Ric (8:18 PM)

Already did the seminary classes... in 1982, then again in 2010 to graduate. Seminaries are biased. Ha! But, so is everyone. That's why I always want to read both sides. “Examine everything carefully”, says Paul. Andy, what is FB? Fuller brush? Foolish brethren? Funny business?

Andy (8:39 PM)

Facebook

Rob (8:40 PM)

Andy, you bit on that one!

Ric (9:25 PM)

Oh....ok! Ha!

----- Monday, Jul 5, 2021 -----

Ric (6:52 AM)

Out for coffee this am. No holidays for me. All retirement now. But I need to reinvent myself! Still trying to figure out what I want to be when I grow up! What's that, Rob? I gotta grow up first? Oh, now you tell me!

Rob (7:26 AM)

What time and where for coffee, Ric? And, do a better job of reinvention this time, please! Never mind, don't change! We need at least one weird guy in the group! Well, maybe "another" to balance my weirdness!

Ric (7:55 AM)

Rob: The usual place. I'm here now. Our weirdness cancels ... in a good way!

Rob (8:12 AM)

30 minutes?

Ric (8:41 AM)

Still here. Being weird by myself.

----- Saturday, Jul 10, 2021 -----

Ric (10:19 AM)

Greg Boyd's book, "Inspired Imperfection: How the Bible's Problems Enhance Its Divine Authority", is yet another gem. He chronicles his journey to where he is today. It is a similar journey to that of Bart Ehrman (and to mine, that came later in life). Ehrman and Boyd both got all the facts, both conclude that "the cup is both half empty and half full" (problems and support for the Bible). But each chose to focus more on either the empty (Ehrman) or full (Boyd) part. There is prestige and money to be made either way! Both guys serve a purpose in Christianity. If not for Ehrman (and others), we would all stay indoctrinated and not educated. If not for Boyd (and others), we might all slip into despair about the Bible. God knows that no one can be completely trusted, so he sends both kinds of guys. Bart Ehrman started at Moody! They both ended at Princeton. Boyd has two chapters on Karl Barth. The book is worth reading just for that! Barth greatly influenced me, too (after reading 12 other systematic theologies, over the 30 years prior). Check it out. A great read from Boyd, a respected fellow believer. I just wish Christians could become more "educated" (look at everything), and less indoctrinated (stay willfully ignorant). They would be much stronger as believers, and they would not need to hide in, and be protected by, the church "bubble". Maybe I will spend my retired years addressing this. But I'm not sure how. Christians are well protected from factual info, and they prefer it that way. It's been said, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink". Heck... I can't even get the horses to come to the water and check it out! Ha! This is where the radio show, limited as it is, takes the water to some of the horses!!!

*https://www.amazon.com/dp/150645562X/ref=cm_sw_r_em_apa_glt_fabc_WB6SASMYWQ14E3RF4R9E

Rob (11:10 AM)

You can lead a horse to drink but you can't make him water! Not our job to figure out how to get the message out. Just our privilege to present it whenever, and wherever, the Holy Spirit gives us utterance! Much easier to put the onus on the One who knows all, and sees all. I gave up trying to do Her job!

Ric (11:39 AM)

Figuring out HOW to get the message out, may very well not be your job, Rob. But it is mine! We all have a different calling. I enjoy my job, and I commend you in yours. "Let each person be convinced in his/her own heart", says Paul.

Alan (11:54 AM)

Greg Boyd is a pariah, and has suffered much malignment for his positions - most famously for being an "open theist", but also his views on inerrancy. There is no benefit in the evangelical world for denying inerrancy, other than intellectual honesty!

Rob (12:23 PM)

Ha! I like that! What a gentle but direct statement!

Perry (1:52 PM)

Ric, I love you brother, but careful on who you are reading. Stick to reading the Bible!

Ric (2:23 PM)

I love you too, bro! But, just the bible? Does not Paul tell us to examining everything carefully, to attain that which is "good". Paul does not seem to be afraid of other sources of info. I am not either. We both know that "truth will prevail in a fair field". Examining our own faith, and even the Bible, will only produce, either: greater confidence in what you believe, or changing what you believe to match what is proven true. You can't lose!

Perry (2:52 PM)

Yes, just the Bible. And trust the Spirit to reveal the truth!

Ric (4:04 PM)

Just the bible? No other books? You sure? Now, making the HS the final authority... that is good advice. I totally agree. But with that policy, reading other books is completely legit! Thanks! Stay cool, today. It's a hot one.

Rob (4:07 PM)

Agree with Perry, about HS revealing truth. But that would be with any book!

Alan (4:08 PM)

Whose truth? Some are Calvinist and some are not; Some are Pentecostal, and some are not. Who determines who is correct?

Ric (4:17 PM)

Good question, Alan! Seems like it is ok to read other books, and not JUST the Bible! Paul seemed to have this way of approaching truth. "Examine everything". One can do that... WITH the HS!

Rob (4:54 PM)

1 Cor 1:10-13 should answer whose truth is correct -- not likely to find much truth with groups who can't even agree on basic doctrine!

Ric (5:17 PM)

As far as I know, we all agree on basic doctrine. And we agree on exercising love and respect for each other, as equals before God. We are all really just humble men of faith! That's where I am with each of you! But it is also good to know what our faith is based on!

Rob (5:20 PM)

Alan, I'd bet dollars to donuts that you'd get many different answers to that question!

Andy (5:25 PM)

Basic or elementary doctrine is laid out in Hebrews 6:1-2. "Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."

Perry (5:34 PM)

Don't ignore the next two verses, just because it is convenient for you, Ric. I think you are doing this ... showing inaccuracies in the Bible... in defense of why others have charged you as being wrong! So, please go to 1Thess 2:13 and 2Peter 1:20-21. And I will give you a "lightning round" 3rd verse: 2Tim 3:16. Now please don't just brush by these verses. Stop reading this junk, which in the last 2+ months you have become very fond of! Here is what you should be reading: Why Should We Believe in the Inerrancy of Scripture? Answers in Genesis. (<https://answersingenesis.org/is-the-bible-true/why-should-we-believe-in-the-inerrancy-of-scripture/>).

Ric (5:36 PM)

That is quite a big assumption you have made about me, Perry. It is always dangerous to guess at someone's motives, unless they have clearly stated what they are. I have learned to stay away from assuming too much about others. My reasons for questioning the inerrancy of the Bible has nothing to do with any accusations by other people. I just accept such talk, and then love them deeply and dearly as fellow believers in Jesus. You, of all people, know that I do this! I question the reliability of the Bible because there is so much evidence against its inerrancy. I have discovered many facts that were never revealed to me at church or even seminary! And now, I can see why they have not been revealed. I do not know if those who taught me were dishonest, or just ignorant. But either way, it was not good. The several verses you listed above (and there are only a few) were abundantly taught at seminary and in all the churches I have attended. I know the verses very well. But these few verses do not claim the Bible to be inerrant or even the Word of God! These things are assumed and read into these verses. You would be wise to not just "brush by" these verses, as you rightly waned me against. Happy to go through these verses in painful detail. What you seek in them is just not there, unless you place it there!

Perry (5:37 PM)

Be ready to say that to God on Judgement day!

Ric (5:45 PM)

Let's talk, live, Perry. Anytime, bro! Texting not a good place for this kind of depth. As for judgment day, I have many honest questions to ask God, just as I am doing today in this life. I do not question God, but I do question the claims of people, both now and in church history, so that I can know the truth and gain freedom from it. Just because religious people claim something with confident passion, does not make it true. Everything needs to be looked at carefully. I know God will be with me on my having done this on Judgement Day ... if I have done so honestly and thoroughly. And I have. Also, Perry, you can let go of that old stuff about people accusing me of believing the wrong things. It's never been a problem for me. I love all the guys who were involved, before, during and after their decisions. They are all long time friends, and dear brothers in Jesus!

Perry (5:58 PM)

Enns, Ehrman, and Boyd. In the last 2+ months you have read books by people dismissed by their church, university or seminary. What does that say? What path are you going down?

Ric (5:59 PM)

Well... it tells me that these fellows are not afraid to look into everything carefully, follow the facts wherever they lead, and do not just blindly assume that people in seminaries, churches, and universities cannot be wrong! I am very proud of them, and I join them in their quest. Come join us! Be a good "Jesuit"!

Rob (6:03 PM)

For my part, I like folks who are not highly thought of by mainstream Christianity! Methinks the Bible speaks to that. Are you saying, Perry, that judgement day hasn't already occurred? Was there actually no cross? Was I not judged then? Will I be judged again? Oh well, no problem! Jesus took care of all judgment! Well, at least for me--not too sure about you fellas!

Andy (6:17 PM)

2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." Paul's above statement about judgement didn't occur at the cross. His referred to judgement is still future.

Ric (6:29 PM)

My path is Paul's path... examine everything carefully. Can't lose doing this. Either you will be all the more confident of what you believe, or find out what to change. Can't lose, and there is really no other way to find out! This is what Enns, Ehrman, Boyd, and a large host of others (including Rohr) have dared to do. I applaud them. It is a good and God-honoring path. God wants us to ask, seek, and knock. This is what good Jesuits do. Right?

Rob (6:29 PM)

I can't be much, if Jesus didn't do much. Instead, I am a new creation and cannot sin (in that new man that I am in Jesus). My flesh is already toast. I'll put in a good word for you guys if you haven't achieved that status yet! Ha!

Ric (6:31 PM)

Hey guys, this kind of discussion is what hot (107 degree) Saturdays are for! Ha! Even Andy is hot up in the northern California valley!!

Perry (6:31 PM)

A Jesuit would address the verses I texted to you at 5:34 this evening

Rob (6:32 PM)

Got 'er done!!!

Git 'er done!

Ric (6:33 PM)

Like is said.... lets get together (ya ya ya)! I'm retired now. Got all the time in the world for you. Yes.... verse by verse! That link you sent, "can't be reached" on my phone. Let's put this on the list. Happy to go through that with you too! All good stuff. Btw, I read thru most of the Christian Coalition material, about a year ago! I know you are fond of it.

Perry (6:52 PM)

Here is a good Christian song, by none other than Johnny Cash: "When the Man Comes Around".

Ric (7:17 PM)

Perry, I finally got that link to work. I will look it over. I don't think I will find anything new. Seminary schooled me in inerrancy very well. Norm Geisler was my teacher! But, still there is only one way to find out: Paul's method of examining everything carefully. And you know I will! Happy to do this with you, anytime. But allow a lot of time... there's a lot of info! Btw... those verses you sent, mean exactly what they say. Is there a problem with them? I do not know of any! Those are the verses Geisler taught us! As for "The Answers in Genesis" website: They have done a great job of summing up all the main points supporting inerrancy. There is actually a lot more! I took a whole semester on it at seminary in 1982. And that was back when inerrancy was at a peak in the Evangelical world. "Battle for Bible" (a book by Lindsell), and the Chicago Inerrancy Statement, are just two of many top resources of that day. Read them all, and then some. I believed them, because I was young and enamored. But even then, I had a lot of questions they could not answer. Bart Ehrman had a similar experience at Moody Bible institute. He went on the Wheaton College (of Billy Graham fame) and then Princeton. There he studied under Bruce Metzger, who became his mentor. Can't beat that! Bart and I have similar journeys, and different eras of our lives, but we draw different conclusions on the same facts. But we have the same facts... the ones that are there and ignored by most Christians! But a lot has happened since those early days of Bible inerrancy popularity.

If a person only gets one set of carefully selected information (and not everything), they will believe only that, since that is all they know! That was me for many years. Then I started really looking into things, letting the facts take me where they go. The devil is NOT in the details... God is found there! The devil is actually in censorship, indoctrination, and cherry-picking facts and verses to support an assumed (usually inherited) narrative. Happy to walk you thru all I have learned. It will take some time, though. And you must dust off that old Jesuit hat and wear it. I got mine on! There is a lot of info never revealed at church. They cannot afford to do so. I'm just really glad I looked into this... all of it! The evangelical church places a lot on the back of "inerrancy. It's a huge lift. I believe an impossible one, and by their own claim.... if the bible is not inerrant, they really cannot be sure of anything in it. I agree!

Perry, I appreciate your willingness to engage with me on this. Few in the church are willing. I believe you will gain greatly if you pursue this diligently and objectively. There is a great deal of freedom to be found in it. Freedom from depending on ancient writings that, at best, are a "reasonably reliable" source; and freedom to a current-day Holy Spirit, who is, for sure, an "inerrant" source. This trading in the Holy Bible for the Holy Spirit, is the exchange you could ever make. The truly inerrant Holy Spirit, as your "final authority in doctrine and practice"! I leave you with the doctrinal statement at your church on the Bible: "The original writings of both Old and New Testaments were inspired by God by means of the Holy Spirit. These original writings were without error and are of supreme and final authority in every aspect of life for any person in any age. The Bible says everything God intended to say to mankind regarding redemption and how people are to live out their lives in relation to God and their fellow man." That is quite a statement. A lot to discuss there, and to dig into. You ready? I am. Love you, bro!

Perry (8:58 PM)

Ok. But, those 3 authors ... not good!

Ric (9:27 PM)

Not good, based on what? Perry, it is odd to me that you warn me against going down a "path" that you have neither traveled on, nor know very much about. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I would bet that you have never read any of the works of those three "bad authors", or gave them a fair hearing. And, I would bet that you have gained all your "cautions" about them from someone else. Piper, Christian Coalition, your church? Just guessing. Am I right.? It's ok for you to do this, but it is not objective nor educational. Happy to guide you down my "path", where Paul's exhortation leads to ALL the info and fact, not just some! Let's go for a test drive together sometime!

Chapter Four

Is the Bible free from error?

----- Sunday, Jul 11, 2021 -----

Rob (6:55 AM)

Uncertainty of one's belief, and fear of having it changed, prevents one from allowing differing views to enter his/her mind. Me....I'm just too lazy to read, so I let Ric do it for me!

Perry (7:13 AM)

There is a reason those writers have been dismissed. Look at those Bible verses I gave you last night.

Ric (7:15 AM)

As I said above, Perry, I have been through those verses in painful detail, many times: at church, at seminary, and on my own. Happy to go through them with you (in painful detail) any time. Just let me know.

Rob (7:18 AM)

The problem with Bible verses is the lenses through which they are viewed! It is amazing when I read them from a view of a vindictive god vs. from a view of God whose loving grace super abounds over sin and hatred!

Ric (7:52 AM)

The problem with proof texts on this subject (inerrancy), is that you are using as authority the very thing that you are trying to prove to be authoritative! It is circular reasoning: "we know the bible is inerrant because we have verses that say so, and we know the verses are true because they are in the inerrant Bible!" Perry, this is the problem that these intellectually honest authors, that you disapprove of address. Plus, they have identified obvious errors and contradictions in the Bible (many) which are even acknowledged by those who defend inerrancy... like Wallace. (Go figure)!

Rob (7:59 AM)

Was that a "tongue in cheek" "intellectually honest"???

Ric (8:02 AM)

No. On this subject of bible inerrancy, they are much more intellectually honest than most churches. The trick the churches play, is that the bible is inerrant in the "original autographs" (which also cannot be proven, except by the circular reasoning method above). But we do not have the originals, and the copies we have are known to have errors. So.... the Bible we have today cannot possibly be inerrant. And this, the church, refuses to admit. There is more, much more! That these authors (unapproved by Perry) have been rejected by their churches for being honest, is shameful. I have experienced this, as you, Perry, well know. But we can know the truth, and it will set you free. Only Jesus can set us free, and when he does we are free indeed! And the way we know we have the truth ... is simply that we are free! (Thank you,

Rob, for that gem!) We will never gain freedom from writings, any writings, nor ever will we be saved by them (according to Jesus). We cannot have a relationship with a book, any book... only with a person, Jesus, thru the indwelling Holy Spirit. The bible is an errant testimony, written by those who were free in Jesus. That's why it is called the new and old "testaments" (testimonies)! Today is Sunday... the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, who sets us free!

Andy (8:23 AM)

Regarding being rejected by their churches, even Jonathan Edwards, arguably the greatest American theologian, was dismissed from his congregation. I find that interesting.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jonathan-Edwards/Dismissal-from-Northampton>

Ric (8:25 AM)

Athanasius, the great defender of the trinity at the Council of Nicaea, was officially kicked out of the church and re-admitted 5 times! I think that is recorded in church history. Jesus was crucified by the religious establishment of his day, for crying out loud! Man oh man, these three "bad authors" are in quite good company! I will now go setup the sound for a small assembly in our community. I appreciate all churches in town, including Perry's! I know many of the folks there very well. I just wish they would all be more honest, seek truth at all cost and not just censor and indoctrinate people. Christians could be so much more free and strong ... if they would only allow it!

Rob (8:39 AM)

Churches don't want people free and strong--they want them dependent and locked in. But even most leaders aren't even aware of what they are doing. Jesus called it--"blind leading the blind"!

Perry (9:12 AM)

Communion. If you believe in Christ, you are welcomed to Communion. 275 years ago that wasn't well understood. But dismissal? The 3 fellas Ric is reading: One says OT is cultural based without being objective. One says Christ is not Divine. One looks for error in scripture. Jonathan Edwards wouldn't stand for any of that, in my mind.

Ric (9:34 AM)

I don't stand for it either....in my mind. Instead, I sit for it, trust God to teach them, and love them. If you never read anything by anyone who has someone claiming they are wrong ... you wont read much! Heck... you should not even read what Jesus said! He was shunned by "church leaders" big time! But what they believe does not change the fact that they are honest about this subject of inerrancy, nor is it an excuse for the churches to be dishonest about it and hide facts from people. I do not wholly dismiss people because they disagree with me. I have experienced this kind of dismissal, and I do not want to be on either end of it. It taught me not to do that, and so now I just love others unconditionally. I love those three "bad authors" as brothers in Jesus (which they are), even though I disagree with some of their conclusions. Just because I disagree with someone does not require me to oppose them, call them names, label them, or condescend them. Just love them as God loves me. But that's just what I do. Like doctrine, I leave practice up to each person.

“Deacon Perry”, enjoy worship and fellowship at your church today. I love all the folks there, and I am glad they are one of many anchors in our community! Perry, You know how I like to check into sources for myself. I have been fooled too many times by good-intentioned Christians, who misrepresent facts or pass on claims that are unknowingly untrue. This is why I bought the whole set of early church fathers and dug into them for over a year. This was so eye-opening! And from the primary sources themselves! You said: "The 3 fellas Ric is reading: One says OT is cultural based without being objective, One says Christ is not Divine, and One looks for error in scripture". I assume you did not make this up and you have some sources for these claims (which may very well be true!). But did you, personally, get this from the writings of the three guys themselves (primary source)? If so, where in their writings did you find this? Or, did you get these claims from someone else (secondary sources). If so, who and where? I would love to look into this more. Thanks! I finished Boyd's book. Though he acknowledges all the problems in the Bible, he does not seem to have a very good answer. His book title gives a clue..."Inspired Imperfection"! Hmmm...! He seems to be saying that God inspired imperfect writings. Well, that's unique! But it does not solve the problem. If what God inspires has errors, then we really can't trust it! This is worse than the Wallace view: they have reconstructed the original Bible from the copies. Really? How could you know unless you had the originals to compare ... but then you would not need the copies! More circular reasoning! Peter Enns seems to have the most honest view. The Bible is errant, but we are to trust God himself, not ancient writings. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, not, the Holy Bible. Do not miss the genuine article – the Holy Spirit! And that's what I do. This brings peace, freedom, and complete confidence in sharing my faith.

Andy (4:28 PM)

Thanks for sharing Ric but to push back I'll say (following that errant approach) that we can't even be sure then that Jesus ever told his disciples in John 16:13* that the Spirit of truth would guide them into all the truth. We can't even be sure if there is a Spirit of truth.

* When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Ric (4:31 PM)

You have concluded correctly, Andy! What else can you conclude from errant writings? It is truth sets us free! And truth can only be found in God, aside from any ancient writing that are helpful as “testimonies” (testaments) of believers who once lived and believed. It is the risen Jesus who sets us free. If you only know that Jesus rose from the dead, sent the Holy Spirit, and that He dwells in you today because some ancient writings tell you so (and not because you experience a relationship with your Lord daily) ... then you are in big trouble. The NT is a written source of such information, but it cannot be the confirmation of it. That is the job of God alone .. alone in you!

Perry (4:36 PM)

Why would you say “how can we be sure”, Andy? John 14:17* says it all.

* John 14:17 The Spirit of truth -- the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”.

Rob (4:37 PM)

Truth sets you free! I don't care who said it!

Ric (4:43 PM)

You guys are great fun for an old guy! All good thoughts and questions! What comes out of inerrancy, is what comes out of it as a natural and logical consequence. This is why so many try so hard to promote it, and ignore all the obvious problems, that even they concede to. It is indeed an interesting problem. And it demonstrates the bankruptcy of trusting “writings” rather than God himself. Perhaps this is the obvious lesson. I am now looking into the inerrancy of the Koran. Did you know Muslims claim inerrancy too? Do you think Koran has the same problems as the NT? Better or worse, each has advantages and problems? Do you think they employ the circular reasoning argument of the writings being self-attesting? It will prove an interesting and instructive study. The Muslim author of "Hunting for the Word of God", evaluates the NT and the Koran, using the same textual criticism methods. He appears to be reasonably objective, and knows the major players on this subject.

Rob (4:56 PM)

Hey, I'm the old guy here so you young whipper-snappers need to show me a little deference here whether I've earned it or not!

Ric (4:59 PM)

Rob probably means he does not care who in the NT said it. That my guess, but he can way-in.

Rob (5:02 PM)

Right!

Ric (5:03 PM)

Looks like I finally got you figured out, Rob! Ha! Why would God go to all the trouble to inspire an inerrant text and then not preserve it for us? If He is big enough to do one task, is he big enough to do the other? And, what good is the one task of inspiration, if he did not do other task of preservation (and he clearly did not do both!). Maybe the lesson is not to make writings our “final authority” ... as most evangelicals do.

Andy (5:28 PM)

The point is, Rob and Ric, if the Bible is errant then you can't be sure that any given statement was actually made by Jesus or by any apostle. Therefore, for example, your belief that all are already saved can be tossed to the side because all the verses you use to support it may not have ever actually been said by Jesus or by any apostle.

Ric (5:52 PM)

Bingo! Excellent point Andy. You are catching on. But we do not make the Bible our final authority, as you do. The Holy Spirit is! So, the inerrancy problem is yours (and all Evangelicals), not ours! We know,

experience, and walk with God, not with ancient writings. They are a wonderful resource as testimonies of what people claim to have experienced with God in the past. But they are not God, or even equal with Him. Barth said the Bible is a "witness" to who God is and Jesus. And that is really all it can be. Confirmation must come from God himself! And your excellent point equally applies to all views of everything. It applies to you and conditionalism, as much as Rob, me or anyone else. However, I do not join Rob in claiming that Restoration is the only possible view. Never have! I only claim that, based on all I know and have experienced with God, and based on the testimonies of those who wrote the NT, that Restoration makes the most sense to me in light of all I know God to be. I respect other views, acknowledge that I am human and can err, and support others holding other views, making love and unity number one priority. So, Andy, is the correct conclusion (based on your excellent point: Assume inerrancy of the NT in spite of the obvious problems, or to trust the only inerrant source ... the HS sent by Jesus, indwelling each one of us? Your thoughts? Many Christians choose #1. And that is ok. This is a very important subject. Everything depends on it!

Andy (6:31 PM)

In terms of a statement, I like the way that one of my seminary professors put it: "When all the facts are in, the Bible will prove true in all that it affirms." In terms of your options, I would assume truthfulness of the NT, while always assuming truthfulness of the Holy Spirit.

Perry (6:43 PM)

Faith behave as if what God says is true!

Ric (6:48 PM)

Very good, Perry. I like it!

----- Monday, Jul 12, 2021 -----

Ric (7:43 AM)

Turns out that the preservation of the Koran is much better than that of the New Testament. Muslims are more certain that they have their original text today, than Christians are of theirs! It is quite ironic that the NT, which was inspired by God, was not well preserved. But the Koran, which was NOT inspired by God, has been very well preserved. Why would God allow this? Maybe there is a lesson in this for us. Certainly, God could cause in the NT something he only allows in the Koran... a high degree of preservation of the text! Go figure.

Perry (7:47 AM)

Free will. That's your answer. The problem with the Koran is that it doesn't explain creation. There's that elephant in the room again!

Ric (8:04 AM)

Very true, Perry! And there are many other problems with the Koran, too! But, still, they have a more preserved text, flawed as it is. Why?

Andy (8:16 AM)

Ric, have you ever read how Muhammed "received" the Quranic material? I have and it's eerily similar to the way Joseph Smith received his. Besides his revelatory encounter with surely a demon, all deviant manuscripts were ordered to be destroyed by Uthman, the third Muslim leader after Muhammad. It's quite easy to have manuscript agreement, and thus claim great preservation, when all deviant manuscripts are destroyed. Please look into this.

Honestly, if that author didn't disclose this known fact, then he's either incompetent or devious.

Ric (9:31 AM)

Relax. I am not endorsing the Koran. I know its history of origin, and that of the BOM. I researched that stuff a long time ago. The issue here is preservation, not inspiration. These are two very different things. Just pointing out the fact that the Koran has been better preserved than the NT. So has the BOM. Seems ironic that they both have better preservation than the NT.

Andy (9:37 AM)

I'm relaxed. Again, if he didn't mention that fact, then he's either incompetent or devious. Also, if a Muslim caliph orders all contrary manuscripts to be burned, then that kind of preservation cannot be taken seriously at all.

Ric (9:42 AM)

Could be. Never blindly trust anyone, even evangelicals. I've been burned many times. I certainly do not blindly trust this Muslim writer. But the bottom line is that church would do a lot better, and be a lot stronger and more effective, by dealing with ALL the facts, and not just **some** (when drawing dogmatic conclusions). God honors honesty, accuracy, transparency, and thoroughness, no matter who it comes from... even a Muslim. He is not afraid of facts, and we should not be either. The source, itself, is not the issue. Verified truth is. We should not blindly trust a Muslim, a Mormon, or an Evangelical. But all of them are capable of presenting facts. And, I have found the best way to verify anyone's claims is by consulting those who oppose them. No one hangs out their own dirty laundry (problems), but others will. This is why the fudge book is a must read for those who blindly hold to EP! This Muslim guy is actually very honest in his evaluation of the NT. Gave credit where due, and pointed out real problems ignored by Christians. He serves God's purpose in that way, whether he realizes it or not. He is more honest than many Christians, on this limited subject. I have met honest Muslims. Some of them are just as honest as many Christians. Like Christians, there are many kinds of Muslims.... radical and legalistic, but also some are kind and love freedom. Some are also scholarly but have a religious bias just like some Christians. I do not like to dismiss all individuals of a group, based on the worst in that group. That's what others do to all Christians (based on the con-man TV guys!).

I try to evaluate each person by their own intellectual merit and behavior. Many Christians are even incompetent and devious, too! Watch out on all sides. I give credit where credit is due. Period. God is

honored by this. God is in the business of truth, and we need to be also, as much as possible. It starts with facts. I saw Bipolar Christian friend this AM. Told him about our group texting. He thanked me for NOT including him. Ha! But he did show an interest in our conclusions about the reliability of the Bible! I think a lot of people are secretly interested, but they cringe at finding out the facts. It is a very important and foundational subject, especially for those who claim the Bible as their "final authority for faith and practice". It sure as heck better be inerrant, if this is the case!

Andy (12:12 PM)

Bible reliability definitely matters, and can be studied due to its varied manuscript evidence, as opposed to Quranic manuscript evidence. Hey Ric, what's the name of that co-authored Wallace book on NT reliability?

Ric (12:32 PM)

"Myths and Mistakes". These guys are all reasonably honest scholars. They are not pop-Christian writers. They stand in the "honest gap" between the two extremes. They pretty much have all the stuff the Muslim guy has (and secular scholars have), but he does a better job of presenting. But this Myths book is all you need!

https://www.amazon.com/dp/0830852573/ref=cm_sw_r_em_apa_glt_fabc_S5YJAX0E81TADZTC4AC3

Andy (12:44 PM)

Thanks! I'd like to read it.

Ric (1:13 PM)

Can you afford it? That's what I love about you... you are NOT careful what you read! Ha! That is a very dangerous practice! Most Christians read only what their church approves.

Perry (1:20 PM)

Careful Ric. I'm not always under the church umbrella. Some of your authors seem unworthy of support, via reading them. Robert Hutchinson. Now there is somebody I want to read !

Ric (1:24 PM)

Careful about what, Perry?

Andy (1:26 PM)

Funny! Well, the best way to learn is to hear views, other than your own. And if I'm believing the truth then I have nothing to worry about, right? I can buy it, but I'd never turn down a book offer. We can discuss its chapters at Peet's when I come up.

Ric (3:16 PM)

Right on, bro! Send me your address. I will have a copy shipped to you, ASAP. Alan... want a good book? Do you want to read it? Send me your address, too.

Andy (4:57 PM)

I sent my address to you, via email. Thanks Ric!

Rob (5:07 PM)

God is love! Found in both testaments. If that's not true, we are all screwed! If it is true, we are all blessed beyond our comprehension. I happen to believe it to be true, which simplifies my life immensely!!!

Ric (5:26 PM)

Amen, Rob! And I like your personal doctrinal statement you recently sent me: 1. God is love; 2. Jesus is savior of the world. Bravo! Andy, you will get the book on Wed, according to Amazon. Next time you come to town I will have a quiz ready for you. Ha! But I would like to get your take on it, though!

Andy (5:50 PM)

Cool! I'll be coming up this week but I may not have time to read any of it. I'll be in touch.

Ric (5:53 PM)

That's ok! At least skim it.

----- Tuesday, Jul 13, 2021 -----

Rob (11:09 AM)

It's not the sincere "skim milk" of the word, is it? Ha! "Savior of the world" is a flat out accurate statement, and it cannot be interpreted differently, except by adding to or removing something from it. And, if my memory serves me correctly, is not supposed to be done to Bible verses! "Potential savior" is probably the word most often added (in people's minds) in order to add man into the formula and diminish the work of Jesus being complete and all inclusive.

Andy (11:37 AM)

You give inerrant status only to the Holy Spirit, right? What if he reveals to me or to anyone else a different understanding than he reveals to you?

Rob (11:39 AM)

He doesn't! Or, one of us is wrong!

Andy (11:41 AM)

Sounds like you're limiting the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Oh what fun! I think I might need to make a guest appearance on your show to straighten you out, Rob!

Rob (11:45 AM)

Ha! Let me clarify my statement in light of how I understood your question. HS tells you blacktop is black but tells me blacktop is white. One of us isn't hearing from the HS, but his own mind, or some other source! Andy, you are invited to come on the radio show, anytime, young man. We have but one rule -- speak all in love!!!

Andy (11:53 AM)

We would need to decide on a specific discussion question (like how is one saved?), otherwise our conversation could go all over. Ric could moderate while I take you and Roy on!

Rob (11:55 AM)

You name it. If you can get Ric to ONLY moderate ... more power to ya!

Andy (11:57 AM)

If no moderator, then 1 guy (me) vs you 3 guys ... no problem for me!

Ric (11:59 AM)

No moderation from me, guys. You are on your own. I will just listen to the broadcast.

Rob (12:03 PM)

The issue isn't how many people, but one view versus another. But if you want to bring a helper, I think we can arrange the production area to accommodate more. That will probably require a moderator and that will probably be me. I do profess to be fair minded. Probably, each of us should prepare questions we would like to ask about the topic that you are going to select, and we will together put them in order of importance. We could do a Zoom meeting and get that part done ahead of time. We can include all these other characters (on this text group) in the zoom meeting, so you could get their help. You will need it! Ha! The zoom meeting would only be about questions, not answers!

Andy (12:48 PM)

I'd prefer to limit topic questions to one. We could each then present our Biblical case for our answer to the question, and then be cross-examined and lovingly challenged. The question above would work, or find one that gets down even more to if faith/belief necessary for salvation? We can discuss more on a zoom meeting sometime.

Perry (1:56 PM)

Salvation. Deliverance from sin and its consequences. Hebrews 11:6, Ephesians 2:8. Yes, faith is necessary. From yesterday: What is faith? Acting intentionally as if what God tells us is true !

Rob (2:03 PM)

And since the HS is the revelator, there is no other interpretation.

Ric (2:11 PM)

Rob, Interpretation is really up to the individual to decide. I know you claim that your personal revelation cannot be wrong nor mistaken. Many people believe this. Personal convictions can be very strong; we all have them. But not every strong conviction is necessarily from God. This should be obvious by the fact that Christians disagree greatly on what they believe comes to them from God. You are only one of many. All I can say is that if you cannot be wrong or mistaken in what you perceive as personal revelations from God, then you are way past me, spiritually. And I am not saying you are not. I am not you, so I do not

know what you experience. I just know, in my own experience, that I can (and have been) wrong, and even misunderstood my own strong convictions to be from God (incorrectly). I believe you are subject to this human fallibility too, but I cannot prove it. So, I will let you figure out yourself alone with God. I do, however, believe it is part of being human (to err and be mistaken), even about spiritual things! And I believe it is true for everyone, including you, since you are human.

But I CAN be wrong about that too. So, I do not conclude anything for you, only for me. I just love you, as my dear brother in Jesus! The bible, HS, and all other sources CAN be mis-understood and may require more "ask, seek, and knock" to get it right. It's a life-long, growing experience. But of those various sources, I believe God alone, not other people or writings, to be inerrant. That would be His indwelling Spirit. This is a big and interesting subject, that you and I have tossed around for years. Such discussion has helped me nail down what I believe about epistemology, for myself. Many thanks. Most Christian will not go the extra mile with me, as you have! Again, I dare not speak for you, but I suspect we actually experience the same revelations and the same limits on understanding them perfectly. As for the show... Andy, you can take my place as guest any time! It is a great experience. But... it is not a debate. We have been careful to keep it from that. It is a conversation in, and about, Christ ... done in love! I hope you guys, Rob and Roy, never lose the beauty and uniqueness of your show. It is rare these days.

Andy (2:56 PM)

If we have a conversation, it will be just that. But without some guard-rails (a clear discussion topic), we might just be throwing gutter balls. Any conversation going in and out, and in multiple directions, may be fun for us here in this text group, but it doesn't much edify listeners. And, I assume, they're of greatest priority on your radio show.

Ric (3:06 PM)

Oh, I don't know Andy. Our rambling text messages might be of great help to people. Maybe I will turn all of these into a book, someday. Ha! Andy, have you heard the program lately, with the three of us? We did the last 12 shows together. That has been the format ... informal and flexible discussion. It is "conversational", not "laser focused". We have no script, and let it all flow as it will. We start with a subject or verse, but then we allow ourselves (and the Spirit) freedom. This has worked for Rob and Roy, for 10 years... without me!. Hard to argue with success. There are many, many shows and podcasts out there like you describe, but very few like Rob and Roy's show. I hope it does not change. Take a listen to recent broadcasts and see if you like the format. If you do not, I suggest you pass on it. But this is really between you and the dyno duo. Just giving my take as a guest. I will let Rob and Roy officially weigh in on this.

Andy (3:21 PM)

I'll be in touch with Rob and Roy.

Ric (3:45 PM)

Great! Please take my slot, next Tues when they record, if you want! Up to you and them. Might want to do a practice run! Ha!

Rob (5:58 PM)

Ric, you need to listen. I didn't say I was right as opposed to someone else being wrong. The HS is not going to give opposing revs! If two doctrines are in opposition, then one or both are wrong. But if the HS has revealed to one of them, then the other is wrong.

Ric (6:15 PM)

I fully agree, Rob. I listen and I understand. Just because someone disagrees does not mean they do not listen. In fact... I have to listen ... in order to disagree! Ha! Consider these ideas: (1) The HS rev is not the problem. We all agree with that. (2) And the HS will not reveal contradictions. (3) Therefore, the problem is in us, not the HS. We are all equally human, so if one person can misunderstand a revelation, so can another... equally so. (4) Yes, if two people claim to get revelation from HS, and they contradict, one or both persons have misunderstood the revelation. But in order for you to claim that generalized statement, it must equally apply to YOU as much as anyone else! So, you CAN be the mistaken one! Otherwise, you are really only applying that truism to other people. I do not think you have the authority to do that. But maybe I am wrong.

Rob (6:25 PM)

Again, your listening needs honed a bit. I am claiming no rightness. I am just stating a fact that should be obvious to all. So, I won't repeat it again! Don't let your knowledge of what I believe hinder the discussion. No doubt, everyone in this convo believes that what he believes has been revealed to him by the HS, including me. So, the question remains: How are we going to achieve the unity of the faith?

Ric (6:28 PM)

Ahhhh...! Now your talking! Yes, this is the bottom line. Let people have (or not have) what they believe to be revelation from God, and then love them unconditionally, as God loves us. I'm with ya, bro, 100 %. Sorry if I missed this in earlier statements by you. This last statement was crystal clear.

Rob (6:30 PM)

Thumbs up!

Ric (6:35 PM)

Perry, the following is a set of "questions about salvation by grace" that I wrote up some time ago, based on statements in your church Doctrinal Statement. I only asked questions, no comments or conclusions by me! Good questions, I think. What do you think? The rest of you guys might enjoy reading this. What do you think?

<need cbc questions here>

Rob (6:37 PM)

Can you email it to me?

Andy (6:59 PM)

I didn't read it all, but I did read statement #1 and your questions. Your questions really get down to it. And I say that as one who doesn't line up with you on this issue.

Ric (7:03 PM)

They are just questions. But, yes, it was asking such questions that has led me to my conclusions about grace and the atonement. Not the other way around. Sometimes, people make grandiose statements without ever really thinking about what they are actually saying, or the implications of the statements. That could be true in the case of this particular church doctrinal statement, or perhaps not. Hard to say. But the questions speak for themselves. I also find this kind of thing to be true in the hymns we sing. When I really pay attention, they seem to say something greater and better than what people seem to be thinking that sing them: "Jesus paid it all".... all, really? "All to him I owe"... all, really? "Sin left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow." HE did this, not my act of faith? White as snow, totally clean, not even a little bit of "bad attitude" left in me to earn me hell or annihilation? Do we really believe this when we sing, or do we just like the super positive message without thinking about the implications? I love that song and sing it like I believe every word, and all it implies!

Ric (7:10 PM)

There is no record that the bible was ever called the "Word of God", until 370 ad! No creed ever claimed the Bible to be inerrant, until the Helvetic Confession in 1536! Creeds after that followed suit. Are these not important facts that Christians should know? Churches seem to censor such info, because it does not support their carefully crafted narrative. Is this honoring to God? Does it serve and strengthen believers? It is truth that sets us free. All of it! Please let me know if you find me to be wrong about any of this. I can be, you know. But I think I've done my homework sufficiently.

Andy (7:26 PM)

Perhaps that expression (word of God) came into use to refer to the Bible officially came about, but was used to refer to OT before that. I'm not much of a creedalist, so no worries for me there.

Ric (7:33 PM)

Creeds are way overrated and overplayed. Except for the Apostle's Creed, which is very short, the long succession of creeds stated with Constantine (like a lot of things). Once he declared Christianity no longer illegal, leaders started fighting over doctrine. So, he told them to go into a room and not come out until they agreed. Presto... Nicene creed in 325 AD! Six more such councils followed over 800 years until West and East churches split... over doctrine (of course)! Yes, the Bible CAN be referred to as the "Word of God". Anything can be. But the Bible is totally unaware of its own existence! It never anticipates such a thing, and no official Bible came about until 387 AD. These are more facts Christians should know!

Andy (7:40 PM)

The "law" actually and literally is referred to as the "word of God" in 1 Corinthians 14:34&36. Granted, it's not the whole Bible there but it is a part. The gospels and letters were, of course, penned in the first century, but, yes, they weren't all officially recognized until the 4th century.

Ric (7:42 PM)

Andy, we dealt with this WOG thing in pretty good detail back on June 23rd.

Rob (7:44 PM)

In 1975, a speaker used these phrases to blow my mind and bring me to a basic truth: "You know those songs you sing but don't believe, and the verses you quote but don't believe!" I have never regretted acknowledging that what he said was true!

Andy (7:48 PM)

Rob, is this one of those verses you quote but don't believe: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Alan (7:49 PM)

Good question, Andy!

Rob (7:58 PM)

I Believe it! But you probably wouldn't agree with my interpretation!

Roy (8:06 PM)

Andy, you probably wouldn't agree with mine as well.

Rob (8:13 PM)

Here's how I see that verse. Sins were not imputed to us, but instead were forgiven for Christ's sake. Jesus paid the wages of sin! Where then is there anything to be charged to us? Papa (the Father) took all the bad away and gave us a gift! I think it might have been eternal life! We gave the Trinity all the bad in the world, and they gave us all the best.

Ric (8:13 PM)

Ah... the beauty of true Christianity.... brothers disagreeing (because they are thinking individuals with different backgrounds) but loving each other as their top priority ... and not bailing out. Thinking individuals! An old man, like me, is truly rich to have such friends! (that's from It's a Wonderful Life)

Rob (8:24 PM)

Question? Does anyone have an idea how much faith, believing, repenting, etc. is required to get God to "save" someone? Is there a percentage? Why would the God of the universe require a pip-squeak like me to do something in order for Him to be good to me?

Ric (8:42 PM)

Why would a God who loves his world unconditionally, place a condition on salvation?

Roy (8:51 PM)

Why would He ask a natural man to make a supernatural decision?

Andy (8:52 PM)

Rob, why do you think we die if Jesus paid the wages of sin? By your reasoning we shouldn't die.

Roy (8:59 PM)

The old man, with all his accumulation of sin, is burnt up and dies. (Thankfully so!) And the new man (new creation) is set free to live abundantly in Heaven, set free from the old creation we once were. That is the Good News of the Gospel.

Andy (9:00 PM)

Brothers, salvation is about union with Christ. We can say that Jesus died for Hitler and his executioners, but it would be foolish to say that Hitler and his executioners were in union with Christ when millions of Jews and others were being gassed. "No murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15)

Roy (9:05 PM)

I guess they are going to hell because God either can't, or will not, restore them. It is ironic that human parents would do anything to restore a wayward child, but God is unwilling with his?

Ric (9:08 PM)

Then we are all lost, since we have all hated someone, making us all murderers (according to Jesus). And this is the point: If Jesus did not pay the penalty for all sin, and took away the sin of the world on the cross, then it really was not much of an atonement. The atonement was just potential and symbolic, if the action that saves people from annihilation (or EP) is their own act of faith and not the action of what Jesus actually accomplished on the cross.

Roy (9:11 PM)

Jesus kicked the krap out of the definition of murder, just to say if you have hated a man you have selectively murdered him.

Rob (10:44 PM)

Great questions and comments! All sinned--all died when Jesus died! The flesh (soul) died, and thankfully so, since we can't stand ourselves in our sinner-hood! However, God could easily stand us because He unconditionally loves us. But we couldn't stand ourselves in our sinful state! Adam hid himself (and therefore us) from God. God was not hiding from us. God didn't have a problem with Adam (and us) -- Adam (and us) did with God! So, God gave Adam (and us) a temporary covering until the cross when He put all of humanity in Jesus. He let us die with Jesus, be buried with him, be raised with him, and now we are seated with him at the right hand of Papa (the Father) alive forevermore! The whole world, worthy of death, has been "born again" to new life by the great grandeur and indescribable love of the Trinity. The whole world has died, been buried, raised to new life and immortal life, all by The Trinity's doing! You and I had nothing to say about the matter except "thanks"! Love you all, and good night.

Chapter Five

Does God alone save people?

Rob (6:58 AM)

Good morning, all you characters! I don't know whether to commend you, or smack you, for one long night of a seemingly endless recounting of this verse (2Cor. 5:19): "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." I awoke with it playing over and over in my mind. This is my life verse, and upon awakening I realized this is somewhere around the 10th anniversary of its' impact upon my life! Ten years ago, I was where you fellas are in your understanding of the cross until I received a "thanks, I needed that" smack from God. Just when that smack comes, in my understanding, is determined by the Holy Spirit. What precedes it is, no doubt, different for everyone. Since you all caused my recollection of that wonderful day, you have to hear about it now. However, I am not at sad about having a hard night. What a great reminder of the most important experience in my life to date. What real Love is ... God, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself!

Ric (7:34 AM)

Coffee Rob?

Rob (8:06 AM)

Lunch Ric?

Ric (8:22 AM)

Fish at 11am?

Rob (8:24 AM)

Sounds good, but about 11:15.

Ric (8:24 AM)

Ok, did everyone get scared off? Yesterday was so much fun!

Andy (6:10 PM)

2 Cor 5:19... God was reconciling the world to himself. 2 Cor 5:20... Paul implores people to be reconciled to God. God's gift of salvation and man's turning to Him coming together, wonderful!!

Ric (7:32 PM)

Indeed! There are two parts in reconciliation, just as there are in forgiveness! But our response in reconciliation and in forgiveness earns us nothing, not even exemption from hell or annihilation! In both cases we are only acknowledging what God already, completely did for us, so that we can experience these two things fully, benefit from them, and engage with the HS actively. Is God really going to react in extreme harshness because we do not respond correctly to what he has already done for us on the cross in Jesus? What kind of God does that? Andy... did you get your book? It was scheduled to get there today. Hope so. Get reading! Ha!

Rob (7:41 PM)

You bet! That is the gospel! You have been reconciled – and so now be reconciled to your reconciliation by God! God was never un-reconciled to us. It is we who were un-reconciled, in our minds (alienated). But not really alienated! It just looked that way in our sinful mind-set. Oh, how we have bad-mouthed God, ascribing human behavior to Him, as though He could ever deny His creation! Do you really think someone could be bad enough, or unbelieving enough, to cripple God's super-abounding grace?

Andy (8:00 PM)

Rob, if everyone has been reconciled, that is, fully forgiven and fully in union with Christ, then there's no point in imploring everyone to be reconciled. Ric, I probably got the book back at home today, but I'm in your area now. Next time I'm up, we can begin our discussions. I might be able to meet up tomorrow or Friday, since I am in town ... if you've got time.

Alan (8:04 PM)

I agree Andy. Repent and believe!

Andy (8:06 PM)

Thumbs up, Alan.

Ric (9:01 PM)

Then that is the answer to my question, "What kind of God does that?" (the kind of God that is going to react in extreme harshness because we do not respond correctly to what he has already done for us on the cross in Jesus). The kind of God who requires us to Repent and believe ... or He will do something bad to us! But if we are required to do something, (anything) in order to keep God from doing something bad to us... then it is a work on our part that earns us an exemption from that bad thing. How else can you define a "work". It is certainly not grace alone, if any kind of work is involved! What did Jesus actually accomplish on the cross? Nothing, really, if we are still required to do something to remove the consequences for our sin and/or unbelief. We can't have it both ways. Salvation is either by grace, or by works.

Paul says grace! The slightest addition of works to grace renders it to still be works. Grace is only grace if it is totally free from works, including the work of faith (if it is seen as the action that saves us). Barth was very clear about this. I agree with him. It was a huge eye opener when I first read this and understood it. He said that "faith is the realization that nothing but the work of Jesus saves us, not even our act of faith". He was not saying that our act of faith saves us, but that faith is our realization that the work of Jesus, alone, in our act of faith, on the cross, saves us. Now, does faith "save" us from something else? Yes! It saves us (delivers us) from the power of sin in our lives, not the penalty of sin which is death. Jesus did that. We only "save" ourselves from the entanglement of sin in our daily lives, by believing. There is no earning a way out of death, hell or annihilation. Once I understood this, I understood grace.

Ric (7:28 AM)

Good morning, guys. Here are some additional thoughts. I always appreciate all you feedback and ideas. Like inerrancy, grace is another important and foundational subject worth taking the time to get it right! Hey... I decided to change the name of the view that I find the most likely: "Unconditionalism". I really like this. It distinguishes itself from the other two views in the most important feature of it is salvation from God doing something bad to us is unconditional. Actually, God was never going to anything bad to us... we just assume it to be true because religion tells us to do so. It would be a good book title! Guess I better get writing. Have a cooler day today, guys!

Rob (7:30 AM)

Humans have a difficult time with grace since there is nothing like it between grown-ups. Only between a parent and a newborn is there pure grace. The baby eats, sleeps and poops, and the parents are delighted out of their minds -- they do all the work and the baby just IS! That's about as good a comparison as I can make to God grace, and His love for us. I could meet anytime today, if anyone wants to be with an old gracer. I really am gentle.

Ric (7:36 AM)

Perry.... excellent picture of grace. Now, apply that to God and us in salvation Unconditionalism! I think Perry would agree. He has a very special son with special needs, who him and his wife love more than life itself. That is how God loves us! You are probably stuck with me for coffee, this AM. I'm another old pure grace guy! I guess it takes one to know one.

Andy (7:41 AM)

Ric, faith and works are contrasted in Scripture (see Galatians 2:16). Therefore, placing faith in God is not doing a work. Also ... and this further gets down to the crux of it ... salvation is not merely by grace alone, at least according to Scripture. Salvation is by grace THROUGH FAITH. (Not screaming but Paul's next two words in Ephesians 2:8 somehow get forgotten in this discussion.) To come back full circle then, here we find faith and works again being contrasted (and not equaled to each other), because notice in the next verse, Ephesians 2:9, Paul says, in referring to salvation, that it's not by works. How could Paul say that? He just said salvation is by grace through faith and then he says it's not by works. What's going on here?? Well, Paul could say that salvation is through faith and yet not of works because faith and works are not equaled to each other. They're rather contrasted with each other. That's what Paul is communicating here in Ephesians 2:8-9 as well as in Galatians 2:16. Understanding this will remove difficulties. God bless you brothers!

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ric (7:41 AM)

You make my point perfectly, Andy, and by using the best verse on this subject. Salvation is not by works, so faith cannot be a work of any kind that earns something. Paul is clear that salvation is BY grace. He makes this clear (and apart from mentioning faith) in the preceding verses (4 thru 6). There is defines what grace is ... all the work of God (made us alive, raised us up, and seated us in heaven ... all in Christ). Then in verses 7 he introduces the role of faith (save through faith, not by it) and goes in verse 9 to reassure us that faith is not a work that earns something with God. Faith is the means THROUGH which we experience the salvation that comes BY grace! Out driving my wife to get blood drawn. I'll be out again in a while. About 8:30. I need to start on that book! Ha! Anyone want to help? Hey, Roy... how's your book on the instinctive life in Jesus coming along? You have some great ideas, and I know of no book like it. Get going, bro!

Andy (7:42 AM)

Rob, Ric, I might be able to meet up with you this AM.

Ric (7:43 AM)

Wow! You in town? Did you get the book?

Andy (7:45 AM)

Yeah, I am. And, no ... but it probably got delivered to my house.

Ric (7:50 AM)

Please understand, I am not against people being conditionalists. I am behind them 100%, and encourage them to hold to what they honestly believe. How can they (or I) do anything else? If that is who God is, in their heart and mind, they should believe it and share what they believe as the "good news" (gospel). But that one big condition (to prevent God from doing something bad to them) must be presented as your main focus. Otherwise, all is lost for folks hearing you. For me the cross alone and what Jesus did as a complete and finished work, is my focus in presenting the good news to folks

Andy (7:52 AM)

The consistent message from Jesus to Paul was to believe/trust, so I'm forced to hold that out as a condition as they did.

Ric (7:53 AM)

As you should, Andy ... and I do too. The difference is that I believe that the act of believe/trust does not save us from God doing something bad to us but enables us to enter into a relationship with God that saves (delivers) us from the power and entanglement of sin in our lives. God never intended to, not will he ever do anything bad to us (annihilate us or torment us). He loves us unconditionally!

Rob (7:56 AM)

Why does no one ever mention Eph 2:5?

How about I buy your lunch, Andy....and anyone else who wants to join us?

Ric (8:07 AM)

Andy, if you are forced to believe it, then you must! But the question is: Believe and trust, to accomplish what purpose? Some have decided that the purpose of faith is to prevent God doing something bad to us. No question that Paul and Jesus and others invited people to believe and repent. But was this a threat that, if you don't believe, something bad will happen? Is it an offer that, if you do believe, God will not do something bad in exchange? Or, is it an invitation to believe, simply because God has already taken care of the sin problem, and now we are able (for good reason... the cross) to turn from sin to God? Is faith what God requires us to do to escape his doing something bad to us? Or is faith the proper response to what we hear in the good news ... that God is not going to do bad stuff to us and so we are free to engage with him in a love relationship? These are two very different views of faith. Each reflects a very different view of God. Choose your view of God, and your view of faith will follow (and you will read all verses on faith verses in that way).

Ric (8:27 AM)

I'm headed out for coffee now!

Andy (8:34 AM)

The call to believe/trust is a promise. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Ric (9:02 AM)

Amen! Great verse. We all know and love it. And like I said, how we view God is how we will view (interpret) that verse! There is nothing in there about condemnation, hell, or annihilation. The word "perish" in Greek means to destroy. It CAN mean annihilation, but it does not have to. It's a matter of interpretation by the reader. And what is that interpretation based on? Our view of God, and our previous biases we inherit from others. Verse 17 deals with condemnation: "He did not come to condemn, but to save!" We know God's goal!

Andy (9:10 AM)

Verse 17 ... that the world MIGHT BE saved through him. In verse 16, the plain meaning of "perish" for unbelievers is to die/no longer live. What it can't refer is unbelievers living forever/having eternal life.

Rob (9:18 AM)

I agree with the perish part, but the word "might" is an awful translation, and should be "would"!

Andy (9:19 AM)

Rob, I can probably meet you and the restore gang around 1-ish??

Rob (9:19 AM)

My flesh and your flesh and the world's flesh perished on the cross! Great. You name where you like to eat!


Ric (9:21 AM)

We have all been taught to read John 3:16 a certain way. Though we read the words, our mind is saying, "God loved the world so much, that he provided Jesus as a potential savior who makes us savable, and if anyone chooses to believe they will not go to hell (or be annihilated) and instead will go to heaven forever". That's a lot of imposing. In the Greek, when it says "THAT whoever believes...", the word "that" is "in order that", not "if". This changes everything. Instead of John 3:16 being an offer or a threat, it is a promise (as you said). God did something (gave his son, not just sent him), and it will result in people believing and avoiding destruction (at least, in this life), and will have "life associated with an indefinite time period". There is a common tendency to translate *aionios* as "eternal". But *aionios* does not mean everlasting, it literally means "an indefinite period of time", or an "age" in Greek. Feel free to look it up. This is why Young's Literal Translation consistently translates *aionios* as "age-during". He is one of only a few honest and careful translators, who does not interpret for the reader! There is more. A lot more. But the bottom line is that we read the NT according to our view of God ... a conditional God, or unconditional God (when it comes to salvation from God doing something bad to us). Indian, Mexican, or burgers?

Rob (9:41 AM)

Thai food, in the shopping mall parking lot?

Ric (9:48 AM)

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Here is that quote from Barth. Alan and Andy both have the massive Barth set.. Church Dogmatics. Take a quick look, guys. Barth's section on faith is only about 40 pages. It is in Volume IV.1 (Reconciliation), page 621. But the whole section is needed to understand this quote. And, actually, all 4 volumes on Reconciliation are needed to understand his section on Faith. I spent a whole summer reading thru this massive work, a few years ago. Read about a fourth of it, but even that was over a million words. Like is said... massive! So glad I did. What an eye opener! Barth is king on two subjects: Christ and grace.

Rob (10:17 AM)

Ok. My chores are done, and I'm locked and loaded for Christians! Who's game? This kind of Convo is needed everywhere. Agreement is not required! Just loving each other!

Ric (10:19 AM)

Amen, Rob. Thai is a good. choice Andy? We are buying! But, you will pay plenty in putting up with us old grace guys! Ha!

Andy (10:32 AM)

Thai is always good. John 3:16 is still a conditional promise for the believing ones, no matter how one parses it. In fact, "believes" in that verse is a present tense verb which implies continual believing. Text you about ETA when we get a little closer to 1pm? I'm on a job now, will be finished soon.

Alan (10:48 AM)

I love this group.

Rob (10:53 AM)

Sounds good. I will be there by one!

Ric (11:15 AM)

Yes, conditional for sure! But conditional to accomplish what? To ward off Gods wrath, or to allow us to enter into a relationship with a God who already loves us unconditionally and has already taken away our sin? There are tons of conditions in life, even by God. But we are talking about the condition God places on man to keep God from doing something bad to him! This is the big whammy! It is an existential threat! No small matter. In fact, it is the biggest matter possible. So the real question, (and it is a simple one) is: Is a person's salvation from God (release from God doing something terrible to him), ultimately up to each person, or up to God? If God has required man to do something, and it is the determining factor, then it is a work done in order to be saved. But, If God has already done everything to actually save people from him doing something bad to them, and there is nothing else needed or required by God (no condition) then it is grace alone (the cross alone). Pick one. It can't be both. And if you pick that there is a condition, then the focus of salvation is on what man does, and God is only the one that provided an opportunity (He just made man "savable"). If you pick that there is no condition or requirement, then the focus is on God who alone saves, and man only hears about it (the good news) and believes what has already been done for him. Grace!

So the two "good news" messages are very different. One focuses on what man MUST do. So, you must always mention the obvious threat, when you share the Good (bad?) News. The other focuses on what God has ALREADY done, as a complete and final action. So, no threat is needed in sharing that good news... only proclaiming and announcing (the meaning of "evangel" in Greek) what God has already done, so they can hear it, believe it, and engage with Jesus thru the HS in a new life with him. But happy to meet anywhere then. I'm not saying conditionalism is not true. Just pointing out all that comes with your view of it, and the view of God that it requires. I will stick with "Unconditionalism", when it comes to eternal destinies! But, yes, conditionalism when it comes to engaging in a love relationship with God. 1pm would be "coffee time" AFTER lunch for me!

Rob (11:31 AM)

Thai is usually a more quiet place, so unless someone says differently, that's where I will be!

Ric (11:42 AM)

When?

Rob (11:47 AM)

1 pm.

Andy (11:52 AM)

Not wanting to change it up but I'm game for Thai OR coffee. Ric mentioned 1pm being more of a coffee time. Fine either way for me. The fellowship would just be great.

Ric (11:54 AM)

To love this group (as Alan suggested) you only gotta: (1) Want to know the truth at all cost. (2) Be willing to let go of already established conclusions (not let go, just WILLING to let go). (3) Accept other views as equally valid, and potentially correct, as your own. (4) Not be afraid to follow the facts where ever they may lead (but also knowing that cherry picked facts can lead anywhere). (5) Not have an attitude that you need to convince others, in order to validate your own beliefs. (6) Know how to have fun and not be too thin skinned. (7) Love others to the full extent, when they do penetrate your skin!

Rob (11:55 AM)

I'm getting hungry. Let Ric do whatever!

Ric (11:56 AM)

I'm eating! At the burger place now. Where are you?

Rob (11:56 AM)

Waiting on Andy at Thai place.

Andy (11:57 AM)

Rob, feel free to eat with Ric.

Ric (11:58 AM)

At Thai place? Andy might not be until 1pm.

I can come over there

Rob (11:59 AM)

Just tell me where to show up and when! You guys are nuts!

Ric (12:04 PM)

Oh... you are not there yet! Up to Andy as to when and where. Alan? Late lunch? Free!

Andy (12:05 PM)

I'm still working now, so it would be like 1:30 when I'm done. Go ahead and eat with Ric and maybe we can catch Thai grub tomorrow

Rob (12:05 PM)

On my way!

Andy (12:05 PM)

I'll make sure Ric pays for my expensive coffee today!!

Ric (12:07 PM)

Ok. I already ate. Keep us informed on tomorrow. I play music at Assisted living at 2pm. So, coffee or noon lunch will work tomorrow. Alan, join us then?

Rob (12:07 PM)

Headed to Thai, Ric in 12 minutes.

Ric (12:10 PM)

I'm headed home to take a nap. It will be tomorrow, with Andy, for me. Meet with him today if you want, Rob. Tomorrow lunch, Alan?

Andy (12:27 PM)

The more the merrier!

Ric (12:52 PM)

Usually! Ha! In this group.... yes!!! Andy.... Did you get that book?

Rob (12:58 PM)

Andy, are you coming to Thai?

Andy (12:59 PM)

Still not home unfortunately, to see if book came yet. I have time for some coffee later today, maybe after Ric's gig?

Ric (12:52 PM)

My music gig is tomorrow.

Rob (1:03 PM)

Only time for me tomorrow is up to 11:30. I get to be with my granddaughter this afternoon--a rare treat!

Alan (1:06 PM)

Loved "Get to be with my granddaughter this afternoon--a rare treat!" I am at Shaver lake until Saturday - yay for vacation!

Andy (1:08 PM)

Ditto

Rob (1:12 PM)

Well, none of the flakes showed up, but I had wonderful fellowship with myself and Jesus! I put in a good word for y'all!!!

Ric (1:48 PM)

Oh, Alan, yes, I forgot. Have fun. You earned it. You got your church thru winter and the pandemic! You preaching Sunday?

Rob (8:25 PM)

I will be out for coffee around 8:30 tomorrow, if anyone wants to show up!

Ric (8:43 PM)

Ok

Roy (9:01 PM)


I'll try to make it. I think I have time.


Ric (8:43 PM)

This is one confused, crazy... but happy group!

----- Friday, Jul 16, 2021 -----

Andy (8:00 AM)

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Found a church for my restore fellas across from my job site. Happy morning to y'all!

Ric (8:03 AM)

Last one to go there is a rotten egg! Well... reconciled rotten egg! Ha! Actually, I might visit some time. Might be a godly, humble place! On my way to coffee shop. Perry.... have a great time at Lake Tahoe with your precious bride. We all jealous! Going there sure as heck beats sitting around talking to a couple of old grace guys, and two young Conditionals! Your sweet wife is a gem of a girl. But you already know that!

Rob (9:31 AM)

You must be one heck of a salesman!

Ric (9:37 AM)

Oh... for Perry to land a lovely wife? Ya... false advertising of himself! Ha! But she knew and loved him anyway... like taking in a poor lost puppy! Ha! But, it takes one to know one. I have such a lady, also! Andy and Alan... Lunch? Its free! Oops ... Alan is out of town!

Andy (11:18 AM)

I'm working out of town again today, but heading back about 1:30ish. I will be ready for a little bite to eat, or some coffee.

Alan (11:30 AM)

Yes, I am still at Shaver lake. Beautiful!

Ric (11:59 AM)

3:30 for me, Andy.

Andy (12:01 PM)

That could work. Where?

Ric (12:04 PM)

Peet's? Or, wherever you want.

Andy (12:08 PM)

Peet's it is!

Ric (12:34 PM)

And ... we'll go there for Pete's sake! Think he'll be there?

Andy (12:35 PM)

That's right!

Ric (12:35 PM)

We can ask around when we get there. We see everyone else there ... why not Pete! Ha!

Andy (12:58 PM)

ETA 1:45

Perry (9:05 PM)

Just got home from rafting. Lovely day. Saw Rob and Ric at 9 am at Coffee shop. Rob handed me a print-out of various Christian views. Under Calvinism, God saves those that He chooses? No, no, no! Then the print-out says people don't have a choice. No, no, no! Free will does not force its love on others. People have the choice. God would like everyone to believe. As for the Catholic view, misunderstood as it is written, Rob. I'm too tired to give all my other view comments.

Ric (9:08 PM)

All true, Perry! But that's the "glass half empty" part of it. Did you find anything good in Rob's paper? Any half-full par

Chapter Six

Does God punish sin?

----- Saturday, Jul 17, 2021 -----

Rob (7:09 AM)

Really, Perry? Did I hit a sore spot? Let's talk! What is the "glass is half empty" part in my paper, Ric? Religion? Then I agree! There is only one thing, a full thing – the Trinity. Religion either diminishes or adds to their finished work! If I misrepresented any of the religions in my paper, I don't mind. At least it gives a starting point for conversation which is sorely needed in this fragmented condition of the visible church! The invisible church is as pure as the wind driven snow – even more so! I'm available after 10:30am.

Ric (7:53 AM)

I encouraged Perry to find the full part. You are wondering if there is an empty part? All "glasses" in life are part empty and part full. We just gotta look to find each part. When we do, we are better people.

Andy (3:32 PM)

Haven't chimed in today, so here's a little stoke to the fire. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." (John 6:47).

Perry (3:48 PM)

Arminianism: They hope some will come to God, hope some will be saved by the Son in this life. God Calvinism: God elects believers, and this means giving them faith. He predestines the elect to salvation, by grace through faith. Once justified by belief and repentance, then sanctification begins. This means we are the New Adam and the Spirit works in us. Catholicism: The whole idea of baptism needs to be understood in depth and a lot hinges on Augustine and his early Manichean education. Catholics are no more about works than any Protestant church. But according to James, faith without works is dead. Grace is in abundance, but this should not be taken without gratitude. Doing that is obscene to a Catholic. So, a Catholic is to acknowledge grace constantly -- to the point that grace from God isn't "completed" until it has been acknowledged. This drives protestants crazy!

There was a bad Pope during Martin Luther's time. The day before All Saints Day, Luther posted on the Hallowed Hall doors a protest. This is how we got Halloween! That's why Halloween is all about spooks and ghosts. A sad time, but that was 500 years ago, guys! In your 2nd to last paragraph, Rob -- Yes it can... those two beliefs when explained with better grammar coexist. Divine Justice: That's the rub point for you. The last paragraph: A gift is not a gift until accepted. I'll get off this "hamster wheel" now. Last thought: If I want to go from here to Los Angeles, I consult maps and guides and plan a trip. I can't do an analogous thing with God, though, because there is no path (of that kind) to God. We need to just believe and repent, then God takes over! The OT is about God, from above, coming down with laws. The NT is about me going up to God. The OT was about the external; the NT is about the internal. All His work ... It's a gift. I must accept the gift. I have a second thought, too. But I'm getting old and forgot it! Ha! Oh, it just came to me: It's about Divine Justice. Imagine somebody from the Donner Party explaining to an Aborigine in Australia what a snowstorm is like. Christ taught Paul for 14 years. So many verses where Paul acknowledges this! Ric, you said that many texts ago, "Don't ever think Paul is better about explaining this." I responded with, "Go wash your mouth out with soap and water"!

Ric (5:05 PM)

Maybe we will talk live sometime, Perry. Lots to discuss. Thanks for sharing your thoughts! I assume the Lake was awesome! Take care, bro. Love ya!

Perry (5:07 PM)

Truckee river was full. Great rafting. But Lake Tahoe is really low in water. The fire in Markleeville looked like an atomic bomb having gone off with its smoke plumb. Very visible from the shoreline. Guys, go back in a time machine about 3000 years ago. 1 Kings 11:2 says to stay clear of Gentiles; No consorting. Let's pretend we were all good Jews at the time. Forgetting Solomon for a second, we would all stay clear of Gentiles. For the next 1000 years this attitude never changed. Then Christ and the New Covenant came along. Gentiles included! And so it is with Divine Justice. We might not understand it today, but someday it will become clear. (Matthew 13:17)

Ric (5:57 PM)

I agree. Someday it will clear for all of us. But much of it is understood now. Some people, I believe, will be embarrassed that their view of God was so small. Or, if that is not the case, others (like myself) will be disappointed that God was not as great as they had rightly imagined. But either way, we will all find out. Is it even possible to imagine God being greater and better than He actually is? If so... then where is that better God who is superior to the one we have? For now we are all men of faith. And faith has to do with things we cannot see, measure, or prove ... and it has to do with things that have not happened yet. (Heb 11:1). So we need not be dogmatic about such things, except in our own hearts. Externally, we love and respect each other as equal brothers before God. You are all appreciated, and you have been a great help in my gaining a better perspective on these "faith" things!

Perry (6:10 PM)

Read 1Cor 2:9, the last line in that verse: Those that love Him have to accept the gift!

Ric (6:17 PM)

Perry, I thought you were getting off hamster wheel? Ha! Good verse. Means what it says! Count on it! Indeed, they must receive God's gift! But to what end? To ward off God doing something bad to them (eternal punishment or annihilation)? Or must they receive it to engage with God in a loving relationship. The NT never requires you to assume the worst action on the part of God. Why would you choose this, knowing his infinite love expressed in Jesus on the Cross. But you are free to interpret it this way, if you want, and I am free to interpret it much more positively. Why do we insist on accusing God of doing the worst possible things to people (torment or obliteration) that any being could do, or ever has done? Most Christians believe humans need such bad things done to them by God for doing less severe thing to others than he will do to them! What kind of nonsensical Divine Justice is that? Divine justice must be ultimate justice. And, as we discussed before, "justice" means to "make things right". So, ultimate justice must be to make things ultimately right! How could a god, who is really God, do anything less?

Andy (6:21 PM)

"If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!" (1Cor 16:22)

Ric (6:23 PM)

That verse means what it says too! Another great verse. But o to hell or be annihilated? What is the basis? The meaning of the Greek word? Look it up. What is the motive to assume the worst possible action by God that has no corrective or redeeming purpose whatsoever. Is this the Lord you know and love... and who loves you and His world? Keep going! You are backing up what you believe with bible verses. Can't get much better than that. I commend you. Any more?

Andy (6:44 PM)

It means that if someone has no love for Jesus, Paul believes that they're accursed. Question for Ric...

Only yes or no please...

Do you agree with Paul??

Rest of restore gang (I say that with love)... do you agree with Paul in the above verse??

Ric (6:45 PM)

Yes, of course it means they are accursed! That's what that verse says. But what does the word "accursed" mean in Greek? Does it require EP or annihilation? There are no shortage of condemnation and judgement verses in the bible. They all mean what they say.... but no more! It makes much more sense that God judges and condemns "sin in the flesh". His goal is to condemn sin IN us. Not us. He loves us and this is what "saving the world" is all about. It is the Old Man in us that is condemned, and will die, annihilated forever. But we are all now a New Man in Christ, because of the cross.

Andy (6:52 PM)

Thanks for not running away from these verses, Ric!

Ric (6:59 PM)

You are welcome. But run where? They say what they say. It's a matter of interpretation, and I interpret them in favor of God, not against Him.

Andy (7:00 PM)

Running from responding either yes or no!

Ric (7:09 PM)

Again, thanks for the complement. I try to be as honest as I can and let verses say what they will, but no more than what is required, good or bad. Learned that gem from Howard Hendricks at seminary! It has served me well for 40 years! Straying from verses, in either direction, leads to errors! I just do not see anything in the condemnation and judgement verses that clearly and directly says that God will inflict never-ending torment (or annihilation) as a result. Not in one verse (without reading something into it them that is not there) do I see such awful things required. The Rich Man and Lazarus parable is an excellent example. This is why, after several years of looking into all of this, I concluded that EP is by far

the weakest view of the 3 views. It really only has "tradition" as its support... Augie, Anselm, and the RC, (Western, Latin) church. But that is just my opinion. I respect yours if you differ. EP is a legit view within broader Christianity; millions of believers hold it (for whatever reasons they have). I just do not believe it to be consistent with the unconditional love, and high moral excellence of God, that is so overwhelmingly taught in the NT.

Andy (8:09 PM)

Speaking of not saying more or less. Here's the Greek behind "anathema" in 1Cor 16:22.

331 anathema (from 303 /aná, "up" concluding a process, which intensifies 5087 /títhēmi, "to place") – properly, place up, referring to something pledged (given up) to destruction; a divine curse/ban ("accursed"); an "oath-curse."

Ric (8:29 PM)

There ya go! And, that is all it is. Anathema is something bad? Sure! But is do not see in that definition any requirement to conclude that God will do the worst possible things to people we know he loves! Never ending torment? No basis whatsoever (except what's been place ahead of time in our minds, via indoctrination.) Is "destroy" ("perish" in John 316) annihilation? It can be interpreted as such! But it does not have to be either. So why tag God with such horror, without ca clear basis? "Destroy" has to do (at least, and usually) with what happens in this life, in the NT. Do a word study on it. Look it up in Kittle. That is my "go to" resource for Greek words. I hope you and Alan have a set of Kittle. I think I found a free set for Alan, last year. Andy, did you get that one that was at your last church you pastored in? I saw a set in the basement. Hope you snagged it. Never trust an English dictionary. And be careful with on-line resources for Greek words. Even Strong's concordance has way-to-short definitions. Vines is better, but a dimmer light than Kittle!

Andy (8:44 PM)

Often "destroy" does refer to this life, like when the Jews wanted to "destroy" (that is, kill) Jesus. When applied in the eschatological sense, it makes sense then to carry the imagery forward to final destruction/death. In fact, Paul appears to speak to this in 2Thess 2:9-10. "They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed."

Ric (8:45 PM)

Sure, you can interpret destroy in that way. But in the 2Thess passage, wat gets destroyed? The whole being of a person, or the Old Man that is "sin in the flesh"? Which do you think God wants to destroy, all of a person for failing to repent, or the sinful nature in him that cannot repent? Do not look for the worst possible actions in God, look for the best. Do we not have good reason to expect the best from God and a saving endeavor that separates the best in us (placed there at creation) from the worst in us (at the fall of man into sin)? Isn't this what you would expect from a God who IS love, and came to this earth with the very purpose of saving all humanity?

Andy (8:48 PM)

Not sure if I snagged that Kittle set or not. I'll have to check. But I did get the "Myths" book you bought for me.

Alan (8:51 PM)

Kittle is only 199.99 on logos.

Andy (8:55 PM)

Good to know.

Ric (8:56 PM)

Yes, destroy can be associated with "the age to come", or the "realm of God", as did Paul. But here Paul used aionios, which means literally an "age", or "indefinite time period". It does not mean eternal in the "never ending" sense. This is why Youngs literal translation always translates aionios as "age-during". Aionios is used everywhere in NT, except for 2 places, (where the actual Greek word for never-ending is used ...aidios). All of the NT writers knew about this word aidios, but they avoided it, and chose to use the word for age (indefinite time period), or aionios, instead. Why? Alan, I like my hard-copy set of Kittle. I write in it a lot! Logos is just a software copy. Andy, the "Myths" book is a good one. We will discuss it next time you come to town. I want your take on it. It's a bunch of honest evangelical guys! They acknowledge all the problems and limitations in the NT texts. You will never get such honesty at church -- they can't afford it. Only the sanitized view of the bible, that makes people happily ignorant, and trusting of a book over a person (the Holy Spirit). Bad trade!!! Daniel Wallace wrote the intro. Get reading!

Alan (8:59 PM)

This group is rare - disagreement without hate and discontent - much appreciated!

Andy (9:03 PM)

Yes, aionios vs adios. Paul does refer to the latter a couple times I believe when referring to God. But, whether aionios only refers to an extended period of time, or literally forever -- once you're not living (that is, destroyed, dead), it doesn't matter how much time follows that point (an extended period of time or literally forever) because you're already dead. In other words, the time length isn't what's so important. What's so important is sin is a "death" punishment.

Ric (9:03 PM)

Alan... we REALLY love each other, and place love over doctrine. Pretty simple. Andy, good analysis. And yes, once dead, we are for ever. But does God annihilate the whole person, or just the Old Man in its sin, at physical death ... and then raising up the New Man created in Christ on the cross to live forever? Now, THAT is real salvation! The other is abject failure.

Andy (9:04 PM)

I just need to finish up my study in Acts, then I'm on reading the Myths book.

Ric (9:05 PM)

BTW ... Paul used *aidios* (never-ending) once, and Jude once. That's it. Paul applies it to God in Rom 1:20 (His "eternal" power). Jude applies to the chains of demons. Neither applied it to human destiny!!!
Andy, did you finish your podcast casts?

Andy (9:07 PM)

No, just got to finish reading about the last six chapters of Acts, first. I should be on to the Myths and Mistakes book, tomorrow.

Ric (9:21 PM)

Oh, Ok. Myths and Mistakes will help you decide if you can trust what you read in Acts! Ha! If you really want the complete picture, read Ehrman's book, "Misquoting Jesus". Caution: It a purposely provocative title, but the book itself is actually quite honest. Ehrman he holds his personal conclusions till the end. Not a big book, either, and pretty easy to read. He intended for normal people. Myths and Mistakes is an answer to Ehrman's book, directly. That's why both should be read. Ehrman's book was a NYT best seller. In the Introduction of his book, he tells about his journey (a lot like mine, but I conclude differently.) His faith dwindled; mine grew. We both have the same facts. Go figure. Ehrman is well respected by Wallace, and rightly so. But he is not respected by Perry! Ha! Ehrman is one of the three authors Perry has warned me not to read, (along with Enns and Boyd). But this is consistent with Perry's church, and their tendency to self-censor. However, I respect their right to do so. As for me, I will stick with Paul ... and examine everything carefully! That includes Ehrman and others.

At some point, we all have to figure out who, and what, we can trust... and why! I trust churches for encouragement in Christ, but not always as reliable sources. I've been burned too many times by well-intentioned, but ill-informed fellow believers! Actually, if you get on YouTube and listen to all sides, it becomes clear who's blowing smoke and are presenting never-test, but well-articulated claims. There are a lot of fancy-talking Evangelicals out there who have not done their homework, don't want to, and don't need to... in order to get a following of the ear-tickled! All fun and interesting stuff! No? I think it was this fascination that drew Ehrman into becoming a top-notch Bible scholar. Don't get me wrong. All sides have their phonies! But there is always a way to reveal who they are. Truth will always stand up to ALL the tests! It is the way God made it. Thus, Paul's exhortation to test everything is a good one. Do not self-censor! Everyone... have a wonderful Sunday in Jesus, tomorrow!

----- Sunday, Jul 18, 2021 -----

Perry (7:49 AM)

Ric said there is not a verse in the Bible claiming conscious eternal punishment. Bologna! Rev 14:11 is such a verse. But you guys like to question what "eternity" means. Ok fellas, you never question eternity when used to describe those in Heaven! Do you? Seems to me questioning eternity has to be a two-way street... Heaven AND Hell. It is very convenient for you to only travel on a one way street. But let's add some more verses: Matthew 25:46. Want to go to OT: Daniel 12:2. Stop trying to make scripture convenient to your human beliefs!


Ric (9:53 AM)

Perry, I deal with all of those in my booklets and videos I produced a few years ago. Let me know if you want to look into it and I will send you the links. As for the two-way street ... I do not know of anyone in this group that does not believe heaven is for ever! I do not pick one over the other. The same word, aionios, All three are subject to interpretation, since the same word is used in all three cases. You are certainly free to conclude that punishment and fire never end, but you cannot do it based on the meaning other adjective (aionios) used in each case. That word does not require such a conclusion in any of the cases. So you will have to base it on something else. In the case of punishment and fire, I conclude that it is not consistent with God's love, nor with his high moral excellence, nor his clearly stated purpose to save the whole world, to interpret aionios as "never-ending". Besides, the word itself does not require such a conclusion. So why tag God with such horror? What is your motive? Not really the content of the Bible! I have not seen one verse in the NT that clearly contains the following needed elements to conclude never-ending punishment: (1) God doing the torment (not just, "is being tormented"); (2) Never-ending in duration (in the Greek, not English.); (3) That the purpose is pure retribution, with no correcting purpose whatsoever. If you have found a verse that fits these reasonable requirements, then great! Or, if you have found verses that fit some other preferred criteria, that's great too! I will not question your judgment on this.

It's your call, for yourself, and I support you in it. And I have never said that there are no such verses, only that I have not seen any. The few that are offered are VERY few, and seem be "read into" (something added that's not there). Thus, I concluded, for myself, that EP is a very weak view, compared to the other two views. And, I was soooo thankful to discover this, based on solid evidence (not just claims, as I had been taught). What a relief, and what a wonderful savior, who accomplishes all he sets out to do (save the world), and will never forsake or torment anyone! Now THAT is a Creator I can fully trust, with my life and with those I love. Happy to go thru Revelation 14 and 21 carefully, anytime. But you do not need me. The facts are available to anyone wanting to find them. "For ever and ever" is not in the Greek NT. This is an imposition via the translators. It is literally, "the ages of ages". If you want the straight scoop, consistently, see Youngs Literal Translation. He was one of the few truly honest translators, who lets it be what it actually is, and not try to be a commentator!

Enjoy church today, Perry. I will be visiting there today! So many long-time friends there – people I dearly love. I am behind all of you 100%. Your church is one of many good churches in our community. But none of this changes the facts... whether they are presented or hidden! For those of you who like, and depend on, "proof texts" in the bible (I do not), here is a list of 76 universalism verses: (Click link, then select the box that says "76 verses: "<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/keithgiles/2021/07/7>). Verses are always subject to interpretation! That's why one list is as good as another, generally. However, always notice not just the number of verses, but the directness and clarity of each verse in such lists. In this way, all lists are not equal. This list is pretty impressive. Fudges book is also. I have not found any EP list, or book, that sizes up to fudge or Giles. Do you know of any? "Erasing Hell" by Chan was not very impressive. And it is one of the best! Selling EP books. Heck, Sprinkle (the co-author) has denounced his contribution to this book. He must have done his homework and no longer wanted to be embarrassed! Keith Giles has a nice set of books titled "Jesus ____" (with various words inserted). I think Andy introduced me to Giles. I

have read 4 of his 6 books in the series. Easy-to-use read, packed with good solid stuff, passionate, Christ-centered and grace oriented. His two best are:

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Andy (8:59 PM)

Ric, while pointing to Young's Literal Translation of Revelation 14:11 can prove helpful, I think the best help is to compare the symbolic language to the similarly symbolic language in Isaiah 34. As we know, Revelation makes many allusions to OT texts and Revelation 14:9-11 contains one such allusion. Feel free to read Revelation 14:9-11, but please do notice Isaiah's language to describe Edom's destruction. Isaiah 34:8-11 "For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever." Edom is predicted to burn "night and day" and its smoke to go up "forever." Question: Is the land of Edom still burning "night and day"? Is its smoke still going up? The answers are no and no. Isaiah is using figurative language to point to a definite reality of judgement, which did come upon Edom. So what, then, is the John doing by using very similar language? He's making an allusion to Edom's national judgement by also using figurative language to point to a definite future judgement of those who worship the beast. If Edom is no longer experiencing judgement (their destruction is long past), then such language likely similarly points to a once experienced judgement. That would be the point of the Revelator borrowing Isaiah's language. By the way, my wife says hi to you all. Grace and peace brothers.

Ric (8:59 PM)

Very good, Andy! This is a killer explanation for those passages in Revelation that Perry gave us. But the problem is that "for ever and ever" is an imposed interpretation by translators. Shame on them. Stick with Youngs, or just the Greek text! Anyone that wants to read either, or both of these books I told you about above ... I have free copies for you! We give way to much credibility to the book of Revelation, anyway. And we read it way to literal! But, I suppose how people read it is how they already believe. My approach is to start with chap 1 and chap 22 (first and last chapters). These are not intended to be symbolic, but are just straight talk, like most of the rest of the New Testament. Understand what John is clearly saying here (first and last chapters), and the rest of the book falls into place, as having mostly an historic fulfilment. This is one of the most contested books in the NT, by early church fathers and even by Martin Luther! I do not place any final conclusions on it, especially when we have so much straight talk in the rest of the NT. Anyone depending on Revelation 14 and 21 are demonstrating the weakness of their Biblical support. "Jesus Unbound" is a book on the errancy of the bible, and the supremacy of Jesus. Well worth reading. This is the best book to give to regular folks, on this subject of Bible errancy! But Giles may also not be on Perry's "approved authors" list. Ha! I love you, Perry!

Alan (11:02 PM)

Well lookie here ... a debate with Chris Date (annihilationist) and Keith Giles (universalist).

<https://youtu.be/pbg4w4FPVlc>

----- Monday, Jul 19, 2021 -----

Ric (6:05 AM)

Woohoo. Can't wait! Thanks! Hey... back on inerrancy and the NT Canon. There were about five NT books that were hotly contested among the church until almost 500 AD (and even later by others, like Luther). Here they are: Hebrews, James, 2Peter, Jude and Revelation. What do all these books have in common? That was a good debate, Alan. Both based their arguments on proof texts from the Bible (ancient writings that have questionable reliability, at best. And arguments about things unseen and unprovable, and about things that have not happened yet! Ha! So, why so dogmatic? Frankly, they (and everyone else) interpret the Bible (and select verses to emphasize) based on their view of God. What we believe about who God is (in His being and character), is what really counts and paints everything else in our perspective ... not really the verses themselves. We all read the same verses and interpret them differently! Why? More important... we will BECOME like the God we believe in... a punisher, a destroyer, or a reconciler! How do you treat other people? Like the god you believe in?

I have actually considered, for a year or so, traveling to LA to attend Giles home church. He seems to have a good approach, which is outlined in one of the books in his set: "Jesus Unveiled: Forsaking Church as We Know It for Ecclesia as God Intended". This is the book Andy introduced me to, and to Giles. I was very impressed with the content and readability. I look for books like this to give people. They are rare! Giles home church has no hierarchy...only Jesus as Sr Pastor (Chief Shepherd). Also, all giving goes to helping others. No salaries! He has other great features too. He is one of many pastors who have fled from the traditional church. Viola's book, Pagan Christianity, is on Giles top 10 list. Every Christian should read it... if they dare. Very factual. An eye opener. But no church will allow such facts to be presented. "Willful, self censorship" is what I call it. Makes for weak but "comfortably numb" (David Gilmore and Pink Floyd) Christians! Ha!

Andy (8:30 AM)

I finished the debate. Thanks, Alan, for passing it on. Some good passages were brought up. I might as well mention that the restore position represented here in this group doesn't exactly represent Giles' position. He believes all WILL be saved (which is the historical position through purging, correcting, etc., in the Lake of Fire), whereas the restore position maintained here in this group is that all are ALREADY saved. Pretty big difference! The former affirms the absolute necessity of turning to God/having faith (either in this life or the next) to experience God's eternal joys whereas the latter doesn't affirm the absolute necessity of turning to God/having faith to experience God's eternal joys.

Ric (8:31 AM)

Andy. Good observation about the difference between the Giles view (same as early Greek Church Fathers) and some in this text group. But Giles, for sure, believe all humanity will eventually be saved, and that God will not fail in his clear intention to do so. This is still far away from Annihilation, and light-years away from Never-ending torment! Perry... you praised and recommended your pastor's sermon from yesterday. I'm sure it was good. Happy to walk thru it, and talk about what you found in it to be helpful in it. Your pastor is a good and engaging teacher. Anyone want to join us? It would be very enlightening!

Allow 2 hours. Good and accurate debate analysis, Andy! Hey... we could have a debate about the debate! Ha!

BTW... Andy and Alan have both been really good sources of some great videos, over the past year or so. Thanks to both of you! Keep 'em coming as you find them. I will watch pretty much anything. No fear, no "bad guys" list, for me Ha! Andy... I expect you to have that "Myths and Mistakes" book read before you show your face in GV again! Ha! Just kidding! Looking forward to getting your take on it, and the logical implications for Christians! I really wish Perry's church would do just one clear and straight sermon on hell and damnation. I have never heard one there in 40 years! I'm not sure they really believe it. Or... maybe they are just ashamed (like having a crazy uncle in the basement)! Ha! Calvary Chapel has done a clear sermon on hell, recently. So has another Evangelical church affiliated with Perry's church, a while back.

I would also love to visit Viola's group. It is, perhaps, the future of the church. Just like what they said in that debate... "the future of the debate on hell will be between the conditionalists and restorationists". The table is already turning, and hell will become the minority view, as the "old guard" dies out. The younger generation has more facts available, and it is impossible now for churches to control and hide the facts (as they have for the past 1500 years). Except, they can do such control on the local level. In that way they will still be around. There will always be people who want to be "protected" from exposure to ALL the facts! And they will always hire those who will accommodate them. You two young pastor guys (Andy and Alan)... don't fall into this trap. Be honest and accurate with those God has entrusted to you!

Andy (9:24 AM)

I'll be starting in on Myths and Mistakes tonight. I'd like to finish my current read in "Jewish Backgrounds to the NT" book. So I'll be doing some back and forth until then. I'll probably come up next week, so we can discuss then chapter one in Myths and Mistakes. Alan, would you like to join in on this book discussion?

Ric (10:22 AM)

Hey, bro, just teasing you. Take your time on both books. Read "carefully", as Paul recommends.

Alan (10:34 AM)

Possibly, I might join you.

Ric (10:34 AM)

I got thinking about the body language, tone of voice, and demeanor of each guy in the debate. If I did not know who held what position and could not hear the content ... it would be obvious who the restorationist was, and which guy's church I would rather attend! One seemed to have the loving heart of a Father... the other the heart of a District Attorney, representing the state! As I have said, we all act out the God who is modeled for us in our minds and hearts... a forgiving reconciler, or a retributive judge.

Andy (10:37 AM)

That demeanor may have had more to do with his Calvinism.

Ric (10:54 AM)

Ah... I agree. I know it well. Yes, not all conditionalists are that cold and calculated. He may have won the argument on one level, but not the heart. What did Jesus emphasize as he did both? If a person believes that Love will not (cannot?) win, and that God's ultimate goal is "retributive justice", then what will their main message to people be? What was this fellow's main message, right out of the shoot? It has to be, "hey, bro... you better do something, or God is going to do something bad to you!" There is no way to avoid this with either "conditional" view of eternal destiny! And if so... they better get on with warning people about the retributive wrath of Almighty God, and begging them to repent. This must be the main message, because man's response is the only real solution. Jesus already did all he could by making people only "savable". He did not, actually and fully, save anyone ... if any form of conditionalism is true!

Andy (11:23 AM)

Interestingly, regarding the atonement and necessary faith, you have all historical restorationists standing opposed to your view, as well as all conditionalists and all tormentists (to use similar language as above). That's a lot of believers in times past and present in opposition to your view.

Ric (11:33 AM)

All true! But I am not opposed to them, or to you, or even the EP folks. Any of the views CAN be the right one, since we are dealing in speculations about things we cannot see, measure, or confirm outside our own souls and heads. My view is the result of migrating from EP (but holding it only because I was taught it and knew nothing else), to the Restoration view of Giles and the early Greek fathers, and then to my current view that came about quite naturally as I realized who God must be having walked with Him my whole life, experienced His love, and realized I had been infected by that same unconditional love toward others. I guess I realized that God had to be the only One in the Universe that could not be anything less than the best, greatest and most wonderful being imaginable (and then some). If when I die and meet Him, and he turns out to be a horrible puny, petty god who either annihilates most of his creation and fails to actually save them (or, worse, torments them), I will respectfully apologize to him and say I mistakenly thought Him to be greater than he really was. But all my questions still stand. They are good ones. I know this, and I believe God knows they are good and honest questions. I look for the best in my Creator, not the worst. I do not base my conclusions only on historical views, only. As the two debaters said... "All views have been held." I also do not base my conclusions on proof texts. All views have a list of favorite verses. But verses do factor in! I cannot be dogmatic about "testimonies" (that is why they are called – the new and old testaments), that are only "reasonably reliable". But I do fully depend on the character and moral excellence of who I know God to be, who I walk with and trust daily, and who he must be. I also base it on the fact that God cannot fail to succeed in what was clearly his goal, purpose, intent and desire ... to save the whole world, all of humanity.

Andy (11:36 AM)

You say it's only "reasonably reliable" and then appeal to it to affirm your belief. Isn't that a little circular? Btw, I can harmonize the facts of Jesus saving the whole world (actually and literally) and the necessity of placing faith in Christ.

Ric (11:45 AM)

Yes, circular. Everything in life is circular, to some degree. The dictionary is circular. We use words in the dictionary to define all the words in the dictionary. But we still use it. So everything in human thinking is circular. It is just how much. This is where faith comes in... it has to! I am primarily a man of faith, not one solely dependent on proof texts in ancient recorded history (helpful as that is). You want circular? Inerrancy of the bible, based on the authority of the bible, is circular to the max. Now, if someone says they believe the bible is inerrant based on personal conviction, or revelation from God... no problem! That is a matter of faith (which everything is, ultimately, anyway!) But don't base inerrancy of the Bible ... on Bible verses. That is just silly!

Andy (11:46 AM)

I agree, that is max, at least an example of it.

Ric (11:47 AM)

Yes, you can do that harmonizing! And you should if that makes sense to you. I have no problem with that. I make hold that same harmony. Jesus saved the world, and we need to believe it because it is true... not in order to MAKE it true (except in our own hearts and minds). I agree that there is clearly a "condition" that God associates with faith. Everyone sees this in the NT. That is not the issue. The difference is that I do not associate this condition of faith with whether or not God will do something bad to people after they die. I only associate the condition of faith with the degree to which people can, and will, engage with God to find peace, joy and success in life. Big difference. This view is FULLY compatible with all verses about faith in the NT. There is no need to associate faith with alleviating people from God do something bad to them. There is nothing in the bible that requires me to, or prevents from, holding any of the three views! So, I do not base my view on bible verses alone. They are too inconclusive. The view of God that I hold is the one most compatible with the God I know, walk with, love, and who loves me.

Andy (11:50 AM)

Next time we get together I'll share how Jesus' atonement can be actual (as opposed to only potential) and how faith, belief, etc., is necessary for salvation. Of course, there's many scriptures pointing to the latter, but how it squares with the former is the rub, to use Perry's term.

Ric (11:52 AM)

Love to hear it!

Andy (11:56 AM)

You've got faith half right... I'll explain what's lacking when I'm up.

Ric (12:02 PM)

Looking forward to the missing half, though I do not sense any loss in the God I know. But, maybe just writing it out. If it is clear and obvious, it will not take a lot of words. Give it a try. I can sum my beliefs up quite quickly... as I have just done. It very well may not be right, and there will rightly be many questions. But that is true with any view! I learned this test of simplicity years ago when I asked people to briefly explain their "dispensational" view. They always said "it would take a long time to explain". It always does,

when something does not make good sense. The atonement of Jesus, and the role of faith in life and in salvation, is not complicated. If you have a complicated answer that is hard to explain, it may not be true. But, of course, my simple explanation may not be true either. But ... it's not complicated! BTW... it could be that combining an "actual atonement" with "condition of faith" is both valid and true! But I see no requirement, or reason, to do this and it places the final means and accomplishment for salvation (salvation from something bad done by God) onto man. For me this is cannot be "saved by grace alone and not works". If there is anything, even the smallest possible action or attitude on the part of man that is required by God (to save us from sin, death, abandonment, annihilation, or torment ... it is a work (earning) and not grace alone with nothing to boast about!

Perry (12:19 PM)

Faith is behaving as if what God says is true.

Ric (12:21 PM)

Amen, Perry! It always behaves that way ... if it is real faith!

Perry (1:19 PM)

On a sidebar, Ric and I have discussed Mark 8:31-38. How about everyone on this thread get off the hamster wheel ad infinitum, of the same beaten up subjects! Andy, are you willing to lead a discussion about these verses? What do the verses say? What do they mean? What do they mean to each of us? What do we carry forward with us?

Andy (1:43 PM)

Ric recently I addressed the often omitted words in Ephesians 2 of "through faith" and it appears you just did it. I might just have to remind you each time we meet by saying "through faith". Perry, a study through those verses? Are there any particular words or verses of emphasis?

Ric (2:12 PM)

Perry... seems like you have come up with a good study, so why don't you lead it? It is on your heart and mind, so you might be the best one to do this! Also, one man's "beaten up subjects" is another man's precious truths. No one is controlling where this group text is going, what anyone shares, or how long we stay on it. It has not been a hamster wheel for me, but a wonderful discussion with fellow believers in Jesus about very important things. And you have been a very important part of all this. So... have no regrets, bro! Andy, yes I did omit faith! Good reminder. But I was not quoting Eph 2. I was generally referencing what is the main focus by Paul in his writings. Even in Eph2, Paul introduces grace, by itself, in verses 4-7 (and defines grace with 3 action items by God alone). Then Paul adds faith in verse 8, and does so with several reminders in making this addition: that salvation is a gift of god, not of works (so the addition faith cannot be a work, that earns), no boasting (actually, CAN'T boast), and FOR good works. Notice also the difference between "by", "through", and "for", and how each is used with grace, faith, and works. It is impossible to include everything in every statement made. Even Paul cant do this. But thanks for the reminder! Very important to keep in mind.

Perry (2:13 PM)

Is the ESV OR NIT translation preferred ?

Ric (2:34 PM)

Greek! Ha! Youngs, for accuracy. NLT, for readability and public teaching. But to each his own. Btw, this is exactly why we cannot possibly have an inerrant bible! All translations differ, sometimes greatly. Heck, the translators cant even agree on which set of NT copies to translate from. This is why we have the "KJV Only" crowd! But also, the manuscripts they translate from, also differ! Interpretation has a much greater effect on our "concluded meanings" than the translation that is used! Conditionalists will always find conditionalism in all translations, and even in Greek! And the folks holding the other two views will find their own meaning, too!

Andy (2:44 PM)

We, conditionalists, simply take the Bible at face value! No presuppositions, never! Joking, of course

Ric (2:50 PM)

Can't beat that. I take the Bible at face value too. Well, I start there, anyway. My focus is grace, and whatever comes out of that. Yes, start with the "face value" of any Bible text ... always, every verse. No adding what is not there, and no ignoring anything that is there! However, sometimes reasonable explanations need to be considered, especially when it comes to how language works (in any language). A lot of errors come about in this way.... Language abuse! And, good joke, Andy (No presuppositions, never!) No one can even start thinking without SOME presuppositions! Just try it! Mathematicians will tell you this too. There can be no "proofs" without starting with a set of presuppositions. Want a good debate? Greg Bahnsen vs RC Sproul in "presuppositionalism vs empiricism". Mind blowing! Another foundational subject!

Andy (2:57 PM)

Perry, Ric, any insights into those questions?

Ric (3:00 PM)

Which ones? From you?

Andy (3:09 PM)

These from Perry: What do the verses say? What do they mean? What do they mean to each of us? What do we carry forward with us? ... Concerning Mark 8:31-38

Ric (3:10 PM)

Good questions! Go for it. Your turn! Looks like Perry and I already discussed it. But I will look again.

Andy (3:11 PM)

Cool

Ric (3:15 PM)

I read it, again. Means what it says. I take those verses at "face value"! All true. Great reminder and warning. Conclusion... do not be ashamed of Jesus! I know of no one here who is.

Andy (3:19 PM)

Gotta love your thoroughness, Ric.

Ric (3:20 PM)

I try. And I do so for myself, primarily! Happy to share. Right or wrong .. I am thorough. Must be my engineering degree shining through. I am very thorough when I study. It takes a lot of time and digging. I learned the hard way. I've been burned MANY times, often by over-zealous, well intentioned, fellow believers. Still, I can be, and sometimes am, wrong! I know this and it always gives me pause. That is a good thing! Please double check and scrutinize everything I propose. I will be a more careful and accurate man if you do scrutinize!. The problem with most churches.... no checks and balance. No really seeking truth. Whole lotta assumin' going on!

Andy (3:29 PM)

Ric, do you think that Jesus is speaking hypothetically when he speaks of being ashamed of individuals at his coming, or is he speaking of actualities for some?

Ric (3:30 PM)

Actual ... unless there is some reason in the text to indicate otherwise. I see none. So we do well to take the warning seriously! What do you think, Andy? Jesus gave plenty of conditions and warnings... all to be taken seriously.

Andy (3:37 PM)

I think it's actual as well, given how the next chapter begins (of course there were no chapter breaks in the original). Some see a nearer fulfillment than the second coming. I might fall into that nearer fulfillment camp.

Ric (3:53 PM)

I order views of future in likelihood, just as I do views of destiny: 1. Amillennial (most likely) 2. Postmillennial 3. Historic premillennial. (Maybe tied in third, with post) 4. Dispensational premillennial. I spent many years studying all four views. Perry, you want to weigh in on any of this? This was your topic of choice. But you do not need to if you only wanted us to ponder.

Ric (5:18 PM)

I still cannot find any verse that warns about unbelief resulting in never ending punishment. Paul, Jesus, nor others ever simply warned: "Believe in Jesus, or you will be punished in hell forever". You would think that if it were true, there would be an unambiguous warning. But there is none. Is there? Paul never even mentions hell in any of his letters. Romans is "basic Christianity 101", and no unambiguous warning of going to hell there? Facts like the above make me rightly suspicious. Even Perry's church never warns people of hell! In that way, they ARE biblical! Ha! And there is also no verse that unambiguously warns of annihilation resulting from unbelief. Is there? Maybe "destroy", but that is not unambiguous. However,

unlike EP, words are used that CAN mean annihilation! But they are not required to do so. Not true of the EP view. Conditionalism seems like a much more biblical view than EP.

Andy (5:28 PM)

Luke 13:3-5 "I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Failure to repent leads to perishing, from Jesus himself.

Alan (5:30 PM)

John 3:16 explains that those who believe in the Son will not perish - hence unbelief means to perish.

Andy (5:32 PM)

That's right!

Ric (7:14 PM)

Yes, those are possible ... but not unambiguous. The word "perish" in Greek, is not necessarily "annihilation". But it CAN be. I am looking for a clear and direct warning about destiny after life... not just "could be" and assumed. Again, Paul is clear on so many other things in Romans and his other letters, but no clear warning about consequences after death for not believing. However, there are many unambiguous warnings given about this life! Torment or annihilation would both would be such a huge deal, that I can't believe Paul would miss warning of it clearly, and repeatedly, if it were true. The meaning of the word "perish" is not that specific. It simply means to destroy and can be applied in many different ways. Only context can say how it is used, and that is quite subjective. This is the unfortunate nature of language, and is why the Bible can rightly interpreted so differently. One can even interpret perish as "never ending torment", too, as people often do in John 3:16. But it is a huge leap. Annihilation is a reasonable interpretation, so you guys are on reasonable footing. I just do not assume that conclusion simply because it is not conclusive. You gotta give me better evidence than this before I start accusing God of doing the worst possible things to those he loves enough to come and save! So, again, I see verses that CAN be interpreted as annihilation, but not definitely so. That's as good as it gets for any view. It is just a matter of degree. EP is much harder to reasonably support. But many conclude it to be true, anyway. And that is ok. Everyone's view is the correct view for themselves, if they honestly hold it.

Yet this does not make them (or any of us) proven absolutely correct, though some think this of themselves. I do not see any problem with different people holding different views, being proud and confident in them, and loving other fellow believers who hold different views. I do this in all my views! I hold them confidently for myself, and I know why I do. But I do not try to impose my views on others, as some kind of dogmatic absolute, especially not based on mere Bible "proof texts". As I have said, no written testimony (new or old testaments) stand as my final authority. Only a living testimony, from God himself, through his Spirit! That is who Jesus promised to send! But I do not impose even that on others, only on myself. Love you guys, and I appreciate all your thoughts. They are all good and respectable thoughts and views. And they are honest ones! I know that... as being honest, or maybe even more so, than my own. Remember, I only order the various views according to likelihood, in my mind. I am not dogmatic about any view, as some of you passionately are. That is why I say that you may hold views more honestly (with yourself) than I do!

Chapter Seven

Does a gift need to be received?

Andy (7:58 PM)

Two immovable truths: (1) Man is mortal, which means left to himself he will die, perish, etc. (2) Immortality is a gift, which means it must be received as is attested many times over. Blessings brothers!

Alan (8:00 PM)

Loved your Two Immovable Truths!

Rob (8:25 PM)

You may be right, but where is it written that a gift must be received in order to become a real gift?

Andy (8:45 PM)

John 1:12 "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Ric (8:47 PM)

Excellent, Andy. A gift can be received, but need not be. Depends on what kind of gift! If a gift is an object, it must be received. But if it is an action, it is bestowed automatically on behalf of the individual or target group. God's gift of his Son was the latter type! Our receiving of it is our acknowledging, in our mind, what was automatically bestowed as an action in our stead!

Roy (8:57 PM)

God point, Ric.

----- Tuesday, Jul 20, 2021 -----

Perry (6:11 AM)

Let me look into this: A spiritual gift and an intellectual gift. In the secular world, intellectual gifts would have a court precedence, I suspect. So let me ponder an object gift versus an intellectual/spiritual gift, in terms of a gift that must be received.

Andy (7:45 AM)

A gift can be a gift without being received. (For instance, I can buy a birthday gift in advance for someone.) But, if that birthday gift is going to be enjoyed by that someone, then it must be received by him or her. In the same way, God gave humanity a gift in Christ. But, if union with Christ is going to be enjoyed, then he must be received. Both of these concepts are taught in Scripture. Both are equally necessary.

Ric (8:05 AM)

Andy, if your wife, or your kids reject your birthday gift to them, will you annihilate or torment them? I do not think so. Why would you? Seems puny of you if you did. Would God? Besides, you are describing an object as a gift. If you took a bullet for them (an action gift) and saved their lives, would they be required to receive it. Even if someone said, no thanks, I reject your taking the bullet for me, hasn't the action gift already be bestowed. Would you punish them for not believing you did this for them, or would your action gift be something you did in love, no matter how they respond? This is the kind of gift God gave humanity. Yes, each person must receive it in their mind and heart to appreciate and enjoy what was done for them.

But why punish someone for not believing or rejecting it if the action gift was done in love, unconditionally and automatically. This is the way you would give a action gift of taking a bullet for your wife and kids! Keep in mind that much interpretation involved here. Words are fluid and flexible. Context is the key, but even that is subjective. Can we have different views legitimately.? I find that churches not only struggle to allow this, but actually foster and encourage people to look for, and make an issue of, differences. This is too bad. I seek people who want to be gracious with others (as God is with us), while holding their personal views, holding them confidently, and supporting others as they do the same. As for the gift... sure, it is both. There is an action aspect and an intellectual receiving of it. And some, indeed, do not receive it in that sense. But the essence and important aspect of God's gift is that it is not just as an action, but as a person! It is interesting that John 3:16 does not say God "sent" his son, (though he did), but that he "gave" him! He IS the gift, and God gave him to humanity, to join humanity, die with all of us, and eventually raise everyone from the dead. That is the gift. "While we were still sinners, Christ died FOR us." The important aspect of God's gift had nothing to do with receiving it!

Andy (9:12 AM)

Romans 10:9. If YOU confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Comparing Ric's above verse with this verse, we see that both concepts are taught in Scripture. Both are necessary.

Ric (9:20 AM)

Yes, both. But in what relation to each other?

Rob (9:23 AM)

Temporally or eternally? Several salvations in the Bible -- not all referring to eternal things!

Perry (9:28 AM)

Not true, Andy, about the gift. I sent a link last week explaining that in depth. Courts have upheld my stance.

Andy (9:30 AM)

Not sure what you're referring to?

Perry (9:31 AM)


The link. Do I need to resend it

Andy (9:33 AM)

Sure, go ahead. Relation to each other, Ric? There's a chronological one... God's gift of Jesus precedes our reception of him. Salvations, Rob? Paul has the eternity in view in Romans 10:9.

Ric (10:12 AM)

Ok, Andy, you have let down your guard! I'm taking over now in your seat at Peet's!

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Andy (10:17 AM)

Hey, I didn't "gift" that seat to you!

Perry (10:18 AM)

I sent the links straight to Andy, via email.

Ric (10:19 AM)

Now we have receiving ... with no gift! Ha!

Andy (10:19 AM)

You can have that seat at Peet's, under one condition: type in my phone number when buying your coffee so I will get credit toward free coffee.

Ric (10:20 AM)

This is my new "go to" spot, Andy. It has an AC outlet and lots of people go by. Thanks bro!!!!

Andy (10:20 AM)

Yes, it's a great spot. And all the food you want, too, since it is in the corner of a grocery store! Got the link, Perry. Thanks!

Ric (10:54 AM)

I will tell the cops, when they come, that Andy said the food was free! Man, did I read into your words, or what? Now, that is a good example of how many people read into the Bible what is not clearly stated!

Rob (11:44 AM)

Anyone for lunch? Just watched part of the debate. He said, she said! Proof texting to the max. Me thinks I am through with that debate, unless someone is sincerely questioning! After 81 years of life, most of which was spent in religious circles, God has proven Himself to be Love beyond my comprehension! But the beginning of my understanding love is always 1Cor 13, which is totally devoid of religion!

Ric (3:52 PM)

Rob, looks like you are getting off Perry's hamster wheel! That's OK. There is a time for that. I enjoy the debates. Informative and helpful. A great way to better understand my fellow believers in Jesus, and what they believe.

Perry (4:48 PM)

Sounds more like getting back on the hamster wheel to me! Reading Mark 8:31-38 is getting off the hamster wheel!

Andy (4:55 PM)

Rob, you just proof texted by sourcing 1Cor 13!

Alan (4:58 PM)

I didn't enjoy the debate and it was painful to watch. I just felt like the annihilationist bullied the restorationist.

Rob (5:10 PM)

Yeah, Andy, I knew one of you characters would catch me using a proof text, but that was my line in the sand over which I will not cross ... until the next time, that is! Ha! It's like sinning, and then telling God I won't do that anymore.

Andy (5:19 PM)

We all have to do SOME scripture sourcing, right? Rob, I know about the "back and forth". Just about every time I knock you or Ric off the hamster wheel you jump back in for more!

Rob (5:46 PM)

I love you guys and I'm here if you ever need me!

Roy (6:23 PM)

Saw a good bumper sticker today: "All religions tell me I'm going to hell."

Andy (6:28 PM)

Three well-known religions teach a similar eternal torment future... Christianity, Mormonism, and Islam.

Roy (6:37 PM)

Wow... Christianity is in good company! Ha!

----- Wednesday, Jul 21, 2021 -----

Ric (8:05 AM)

Perry.... I listened to your pastor's sermon on Mark 8. Consistent with his style, it was straight from the Biblical text. That is hard to beat! Also consistent with your church, and most Evangelical churches, he

focused on the severity of heeding warnings by Jesus. Nothing wrong with that. This may have been a great help to many who heard him. But it laid quite a burden on listeners, to live up to the very difficult task of being a strong and faithful follower of Jesus. Sometimes this kind of sermon is needed for some folks. It just depends where they are in their walk with God. He rightly stated, at the beginning, that any of us (and he included himself), can "have agendas that might be erroneous about Jesus" (my paraphrase). Good caution and a needed perspective! I took good notes. Happy to talk about it with you, any time. Next week, your associate Pastor takes on Mark 9. This contains one of only five different references to Gehenna in the NT! Do not miss it!

Ric (8:52 AM)

Andy... I got your spot, at Peet's again today? You in town? Rob, Alan and I had lunch together yesterday. Good time!

Andy (9:27 AM)

Don't get too comfortable because it'll be mine when I'm back up there! We've got some friends coming our way this weekend, so my plan is to come up next week. I'm thinking Thursday (the 29th) will work best to meet up. If anyone else would like to join us, please do!

Ric (9:59 AM)

Hey... you did not mention the relentless automatic door next to this seat! Ha!

Alan (10:14 AM)

That's your thorn in the flesh, Ric - keeps you humble

Rob (11:55 AM)

Ric humble? Oxymoron? When they were passing out humble pie, he and I thought they said bumble berry pie, and we said we'd take a lot!

Alan (11:56 AM)

Ok, if knew you all better, and I was sure you'd know I was only joking, I'd add that you had the same confusing when it came to brains! Ha!

Ric (11:57 AM)

Yes... when they handed out brains, I thought they said trains, and I didn't want any! Ha! Rob is always joking. It's his perverted version of love! Ha! But I know his heart ... made of gold!

Rob (11:58 AM)

You are a pretty smart fella, Alan! Met me twice and you got me pegged!

Alan (11:59 AM)

Ha! Good one, Rob.

Ric (11:59 AM)

Actually, God keeps giving me “humility booster shots”. Got humbled down to my socks a few years ago. It was very hard, but one of the most life-changing experiences ever! More booster shots... please!

Alan (12:01 PM)

In those meetings, I can tell you this: I sure do like you, Ric, and I like this whole group. I enjoy the banter/debate that is charitable. As I told you guys, yesterday, I try and avoid theological debates because of how quickly they turn hostile. But I have never have felt that with this group!

Rob (12:02 PM)

Now I'm a pervert! Oh well, just like Alan was saying, yesterday, you don't kid people you don't like. If you let me hang around you guys, look out!

Alan (12:03 PM)

When Andy and I were just becoming friends, we'd talk about theology and I never felt insulted by Andy. That was very meaningful to me. This is why I trusted Ric, too.

Ric (12:05 PM)

We really do place love above theology and related things, here in this group. That is how it MUST be!. I think we have all learned this the hard way... sometimes by being spiritually abused, but also sometimes by being the abuser! Makes us more patient with both groups of folks. Actually, these days, I deal with the abused folks more than the abusers. And they are easier to help! Ha! Hey... I thinking invented a new word, above... theol-ugly! Ha!

Rob (12:16 PM)

Those are my sentiments about this group as well! My delight is in planting seeds -- not in trying to convince anyone. “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still!”

Perry (3:20 PM)

Ok, Rob, go with that thought. Now please read Gal 2:11-14. What was Paul doing with Peter....and Barnabas was collateral damage! What do these verses mean, Rob? Don't use the Mirror Bible, please. Use ESV or NIV. Now, what do these verses mean? What do they mean to you? What do you do with this going forward in your sanctification process? What are you going to present to others? To glorify God, go out and make disciples of all nations!

Rob (4:23 PM)

Paul was chewing Peter out! They mean to me that there is no difference racially or theologically. Going forward, I live the truth in 1Cor 1:30. I present to others: God is Great, God is Good, God is Love, He loves You and you are His! Making disciples has never been one of Papa's (the Father's)mandates to me. If He wants me to do that, all He has to give me the order, and ability to do it, and I'll be on my way! A verse in the Bible spoken to an Apostle is not necessarily a command to me! Did I get any of the questions right?

Roy (8:20 PM)

Let's talk about this stuff on the radio show sometime!

Perry (8:37 PM)

What we can talk about is conflicts. My personal way of handling conflicts is too "fleshy". Does the gospel give us a pattern and a means to healthy conflict resolution? In Galatians, Paul approached Peter publicly. He didn't gossip about him. He didn't bully him, either. Paul confronted Peter. It was out of from self-interest. Paul defended the Bible, too. Paul learned from Jesus. Jesus confronted sin and invited relationships with people. He always seemed to provide a way for reconciliation, with love, with confidence (faith). Conflict seems to get resolved with Christ (grace and truth) in tender wisdom. That's how Brennan Manning described it. So for me, these verses address: Where's my heart; What's my power source; What's my commitment (to be right, or to engage with people); Where am I going (to argue, or convey and invite others). What am I feeling? What's my goal? What result am I seeking? So, Mark 8:31-38 is revealing. But so is Galatians 2:11-14. Andy, do you want to lead this discussion?

Ric (8:39 PM)

Good summary, Perry. You are doing a great job of leading!

Perry (8:44 PM)

I think I should explain what I mean by "power source". In conflicts, do I attack or withdraw? Am I a peace maker or a peace keeper? Do I trust the Spirit to free me from the sin of pride and fear? Then there are the fiery darts ... what am I doing with my Ephesians suit of armor?

Ric (9:02 PM)

Good questions!

Rob (9:07 PM)

That all sounds great. You are a much more of an introspective person than I am ... or you have more confrontations than I. I just have love as my goal and let the details work themselves out.

Ric (9:42 PM)


I agree, Rob. Love, real love, complete love, like Paul defined in 1Cor 13. That is the only real solution. I learned this quite well about 6 years ago in a big conflict with fellow church leaders. What a wonderful, life changing lesson. Love not only covers a multitude of sins, it never fails!!! I'm not convinced that Paul always lived up to his own principles. But isn't this true of all of us? Paul was just as human as us, and he had a nasty Pharisee background tugging at him. But he was a beautiful example of how the HS can, and does, change lives. It is never a perfect process for anyone. But one day we will be perfect in every sense... when we are raised to newness of life. It is easy, and very human, to focus on the problems (sin) rather than on the solution (grace).

----- Thursday, Jul 22, 2021 -----

Rob (7:09 AM)

Available for coffee, or lunch, if any takers.

Ric (7:46 AM)

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Andy: They told me here at Peet's, that if I sit in the same seat 3 days in a row.... I own it! Sorry, bro.

Andy (7:46 AM)

OK, I'm charging you rent!


Rob (8:50 AM)

Here's a post from a fella on FB who I have NOT influenced: "Regardless of what you think you might know about grace and the unconditional love of the Father, the fact remains that you will not fully benefit from it, nor will you experience all the joy it produces, until you can see that every single step in the process and every single detail of his perfect plan was fully executed by him from start to finish and from first to last before you were ever born. And nothing that you ever do can change that fact. Nothing you ever do can make him love you more, and nothing you ever do can make him love you any less ... all because he loves you with a perfect love! He did it all for you and he did it all AS you, on the cross. That's the good news of the gospel. You have already been reconciled!"

Ric (9:08 AM)

Andy... you also did not tell me about the annoying morning show on the TV monitor here! Rent just went down! In fact, I gonna charge you rent, for protecting your spot while being torment by this "Katie Couric wanna-be" on TV. Amen Rob. Thanks for sharing that post. That's my story, too! I got burned out on being told, all my life, that I was never living up to all God required (deny self, take up cross, follow Jesus, study Bible, go to pray meetings, etc... and that I must fully want to do all this, too. Don't get me wrong, these are all good and important things, but we drive people away from God by presenting him as a Father who is never fully satisfied with us ... unless we believe, and believe the right set of truths, really mean it, do works to prove it, and never fall away, etc. So glad my Father, Jesus' Father, is not like that but always has fully loved and accepted me, will never forsake me (all because of what he has done, not what I do), and that I can fully trust him with no fear concerning my future or anyone else's! This is the God I tell people about... not one who is angry and plans to torment (or annihilate) people if THEY do not do something to prevent it.

This is why I always close with singing "Over the Rainbow", at assisted living places, and then I point to the sky and tell them "that's where we are all headed... over the rainbow! You're all going to make it. God does not make junk. He loves you and will never forsake you". There is a lady at Perry's church, who just last week (when I was visiting) told me she is still angry that I told people, at a church gathering five years ago, that I do this at assisted living places. And another five years before that, that same lady told me she could not read the OT anymore because all the violence made her feel sick! How do people get in this love/hate view of God? I respect other views of God, and support others in them. But I will NEVER go back to any such views. Once I gained the highest possible view of God, one where I could not humanly imagine Him any greater.... I knew I had the real God, who MUST be. I knew was "home"! Hey, Andy... you can have your spot back, and "TV Katie" along with it! Ha!

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I left your torn chair, too! Ha!


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Most Christians have a ying-yang view of God. He is, simultaneously, the most loving and most terrible being in the universe! (John MacArthur uses that term, terrible, in describing God ... proudly. He has a verse, of course). This is actually a very pagan view of God, and it comes to us by the paganization of Christianity (see Violas book, Pagan Christianity). But it also comes to us naturally. This is why we needed Jesus to come and "show us the Father"! All of this stuff is why I want to "educate" the church out of their stubborn, "self-inflicted indoctrination". I love them... I really do! But they will not allow anyone to get close enough to help them. So sad! Perry knows all about this. So does Andy.

Rob (12:23 PM)

This older post showed up on my messenger and even if you don't agree, you might see the humor!

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Some of you older folks should get a kick out of this. Remember when your parents would tell you to "stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about"? Well, I figured out where that phrase came from--Israel's journey out of Egypt into the desert. God said, "Stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about" and thus the Law came into being! (if, in fact, He actually gave them the Law). Transforming GRACE is God's punishment for sinners! (Moltman).

Ric (1:08 PM)

That's good Rob. Lots of truth to that. If God actually gave Israel that nasty law, it certainly did its job of demonstrating what a lack of grace is! Perhaps God was really saying, "You people want to know what it would take to 'appease God'? Here it is... the law! When you get done failing, I will come as a human and show you how it really is, and has always been ... loving, all-sufficient grace!"

Rob and Roy will finally let me back on the radio show! I promise to be good! Honest! Ha! (actually, I took a break to maintain my "guest" status!) We record tonight. You have all given us a lot to think about. Often, the best show discussions come from some conversation one of the three of us have had. Right, Rob and Roy? If they let me back on the show again as a guest, I'm sure they would allow any of you too!

Rob (8:35 PM)

Grace is the function of love, and we do that! But we demand that of our guests, too! Any guest is welcome as long as he can love me ... and that's pretty hard to do!

Roy (10:06 PM)

When the fullness of grace enters into a person's life, sin no longer becomes the central focus on living the spiritual life.

----- Friday, Jul 23, 2021 -----

Ric (5:21 AM)

We recorded a set of radio shows last night. They will roll out in August (after this Sunday). It went really well. We referenced this group, but not by any individual names. We even reference some of our discussions we have had. So thanks for all your input and ideas! Take a listen in August, guys, if you want. We would love to get any feedback from you, good, bad or ugly... but in love. Love, for sure, "gives it straight", but does so kindly. You are all good at that. The broadcasts are at 8:30 am Sundays. You can also get on Rob and Roy's website and listen ATER each Sunday airing. Andy... let me know when you come to town again. Hopefully you are finding time to read thru Myths and Mistakes. Looking forward to your take on this book. (Anyone else is welcome to join us). I know of few people who will read this kind of book, so I appreciate your interest. Reliability of the Bible is foundationally important to all we do and believe.

Rob (7:57 AM)

The understanding of truth comes only from the Holy Spirit! We may HEAR truth from any number of sources but will only KNOW the truth from the HS. And this truth sets us free! The day I told the Father I was throwing everything out that had been told to me about spiritual things, that was the day my life became alive and thrilling! Grace began walking in my life and began chasing fear out. And after these 40 plus years, walking in this wonderful freedom from fear of both man and God, the sum total of what I have learned would only be a grain of sand in the ocean of Father's greatness! This I know for sure -- it's the shepherd's responsibility to find the sheep and bring them back to the fold!

Ric (8:16 AM)

Amen. Grace is very customized and personal, from God. This is why we can afford to celebrate what God reveals to others, and still hold our own as "our own". A life of grace and a life of love.

Andy (9:05 AM)

Agreed Roy. Jesus, and what he taught, should become our central focus. Rob, if you're saying that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate revealer of truth, I agree. We probably all do. Look at us all agreeing with each other!

Ric (9:44 AM)

The HS has to be the final authority. That is what Jesus promised to send, and indwell us! Think about what that means! Why people with the HS conclude differently is a different discussion. But that does not nullify who the HS is, and his/her/its role.

Andy (10:06 AM)

Technically, Jesus has final authority since he was given all authority (Matthew 28:18). The Holy Spirit is the ultimate revealer of spiritual truth (John 16:13). This doesn't mean though that knowledge of biblical languages, cultural customs, etc., don't aid in understanding because they most certainly do. An analogy that has been put forward regarding knowing biblical languages and not knowing them, is seeing TV in high def and seeing TV in standard def.

Ric (10:06 AM)

Good point. I was thinking, as far as seeking truth goes, and experiencing revelation. Jesu for sure is give all authority from the Father, and he sent the HS to reveal the father, himself, and truth that sets us free. Jesu did not send the Holy Bible, the RC church, etc. Most of them showed up on their own! Do we communicate directly with the Son or Father? Another Great speculation topic. Trinitarian vs Unitarian plays into it! There is also a Twin-itarian view.

Andy (10:13 AM)

Jesus taught his disciples to pray to their Father in heaven.

Ric (10:47 AM)

Bingo, Andy! Ok to pray to HS? Pray to Jesus now that he has ascended? Pray to Mary, or your own parents? What is "prayer", anyway? Am I "praying" to you when I make a request of you? If the Father overhears someone praying to Mary, is He free to answer them anyway, just because he loves them?

Andy (11:51 AM)

Yes, God is free to answer them if they're praying to Mary. Is it okay to pray to the Holy Spirit? Sure, though it's not exemplified in Scripture that I'm aware of. Praying to Mary or any other person are also not exemplified in Scripture. Only prayer to the Father and Jesus are exemplified in Scripture (the latter only twice).

Alan (12:01 PM)

Prayer seems meaningless if one is not praying to an all-powerful, all knowing, transcendent being. Mary, the saints, dead people do not seem to fit that description, in my opinion.

Ric (12:14 PM)

Good answers! Prob not absolutes, but they all seem like common sense. We talked about the role of common sense ("come let's reason together") on rather radio show, last night. Many Christians blindly submit to someone's dogmatic interpretation of the Bible, and never seem to ask if it makes sense. I swear, some of them talk like the less sense it makes, the truer it is. They always quote "God's ways are higher than ours" as proof. That verse is true, but it is not a catch-all for foolish thinking. God gave us a brain so that we CAN think things through.

Andy (12:32 PM)

There is a need for common sense in interpreting and applying Scripture, but in "Come now, let us reason together..." the context in Isaiah 1 concerns God's desire for Judah and Jerusalem to repent. See Isaiah 1:1-20.

Ric (1:00 PM)

True! But it was about salvation issues. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow". That is about salvation. And it tells us something about how God operates, and his disposition toward people. It is reasonable and considerate... like Jesus was! Commands to repent were a never-ending drone by the prophets! And the people seldom did, or fell back after they did. This seems to all be part of the "object lesson of the OT" -- that we cannot save ourselves, or even believe sufficiently, without a savior coming to join humanity, do the saving FOR us, make us a new person in Christ, and indwelling us with God himself via his spirit! Wow, Andy... you have been gone almost a year! Amazing.

Andy (3:29 PM)

Agreed, Isaiah 1 does tell us something about how God operates. Isaiah 1:19-20 (right after that verse you quoted): "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." In brief, God is abundantly merciful but those who don't humble themselves can experience some deadly repercussions. Yup, been just about one year!

Ric (3:48 PM)

Yep, a reasonable request ... even a promise. Reasonable words, just as God suggested of himself. But , again, they usually did not choose to be reasonable, as God was. So, the lesson was re-run, over and over, ad nauseum in the prophets... repent, or else! I remember reading the prophets repeatedly some years ago, and at some point I put the Bible down and said, out loud, "enough, already. I get it. You've made the point! Israel is not cooperating!" The bulk of the prophetic books are complaints about Israel. There are hopeful things said too (usually at the close of each book), and some promises about a coming Messiah (that's mostly the parts Jesus quoted). But the threats never worked! Israel never really repented, and if at all, not for long. They clearly needed a savior to come take away the old sinful man in the flesh, and make them into a new a creation in Jesus (as the second and final Adam)! No repentance or act of faith can accomplish this! This is where the solution is... in what God does, not in man repenting, (before or after the cross). People are told to believe under the new covenant, because they have already been reconciled by Christ on the cross... not because in believing they save themselves. They could not do it in the OT, and could not do it even in the NT. It can only be accomplished by God, FOR us, on the cross, in Christ. This is the essence of grace.

Rob (4:47 PM)

My take is that God loves everyone and that he does for Christians (and Muslims and all humanity), what is best. He surely makes allowances for we ignorant humans since most of us have been reared and taught by other ignorant humans. I do not hold any of my ignorant teachers responsible for my ignorance! I am just grateful for those who have helped lead me out of my religious bondage! For a time, I spoke my ignorance to any who would listen, and I have since then repented of that foolishness! I used to judge those who disagreed with me to be unsaved individuals. But now, I judge everyone to be my equal -- even you crazy lovable guys!

Ric (6:16 PM)

Well said!

----- Saturday, Jul 24, 2021 -----

Rob (9:00 AM)

<https://pastorandphilosopher.buzzsprout.com/967219/8795173>

Trying to send you brothers a link to a conversation I hope you will listen to.

Andy (3:29 PM)

I listened to it, Rob. You and Baxter Kruger seem to think alike.

Rob (4:10 PM)


You're smarter than you look! Ha! Well, not much point in pointing people to someone who thinks as myself? You have already read plenty of people who think that way I used to think that way. You are free to think that way. Everyone is always be my brother, even if they are an atheist! The thing about Baxter is that he, at one time, thought that same way as he explained in the video. Why did he change? Why did I change?

Andy (4:52 PM)

True, not much point in pointing me to someone you agree with. I don't recall hearing why Baxter changed his view, though I think I recall him telling a little about his earlier life. Do you know why he changed? It seems that people change towards a restorative view because of some personal/subjective experiences. Do you know if his change was due (at least primarily) to personal/subjective experiences? How about yours?

Ric (4:57 PM)

People do, indeed change (from any view) based at least partly on personal/subjective experience. But there is often more to it that supported the change. For me, it was heavily "examining everything carefully", as Paul exhorts us to do. I've met Baxter many years ago at Rob's house. When he told me his story, I gave him a hug and told him he was "my new best friend". I had just come to the same conclusion as he did, based on my study of 150 salvation verses in the NT. They revealed to me that what Jesus did was actual AND what he did was for everyone. I remember thinking... "game over". It was life changing. Baxter told me how he took *what would have been his last semester (at Reformed Seminary, the most strict and respected of reformed theology schools)... took that semester off, and spent all his time in the library studying church history. He came to the conclusion, as I did (and many others, too) that the church, before Augustine, did not much hold to EP. I had done the same long study he did. I recommend it to anyone. But it takes a long time, much effort, and great courage.

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This is an ad that was on the Mark Levin show. The guy was saying, "all you gotta do is pray these words" (the ones on the screen). I agree with him, but I believe we need to do this for a different reason

than he does. We do not, and cannot, do this to prevent God from doing something bad to us. This was taken care of on the cross. (Actually, the cross saved us from SIN that would do something bad to us, not that God would!). Instead, we need pray this prayer to invite God to do something good IN us and WITH us. These are two very different "good news" messages!

Andy (5:05 PM)

I'm not sure to what degree anyone actually held to ECT before Augustine, but certainly he popularized it.

Rob (5:12 PM)

I think it was when Baxter read Athanasius? That was the answer to his questions. If anyone was ever indoctrinated to the max, it was probably Baxter. But he wasn't content to blindly follow.

Andy (5:17 PM)

Yes, he did mention Athanasius. For the record, Baxter came across as well read. I could see why you might really like listening to him.

Ric (4:19 PM)

Yes, Baxter told me it was a small book titled The Incarnation, by Athanasius, that was key. I read this too, and highly recommend it. One publication of it has a great introduction by CS Lewis. Get that one if you can. In this book Athanasius demonstrates how the incarnation was not just needed to bring salvation to humanity, but was part of the salvation God accomplish for humanity. It is the main reason I tell people that Jesus came to JOIN humanity, die with us, for us... even AS us, on the cross.

Rob (5:21 PM)

For my part, from 1975 on I was a grace-walk guy, but still believed one must believe to become saved. In 2011, I read 2Cor 5:19 and finally understood everything was all of God and nothing was required of me or of anyone. Jesus, actually, became the Savior of the World, not merely as a glib saying, but as the actual real truth!

Andy (8:38 PM)

Good hearing your testimonials. Thanks guys! Ric, I'm not a fan of the simple salvation prayer approach, though God answers it for sure. 150 verses? Those all in your book? Roy, Jesus being the savior of the world and the necessity of belief, to use Perry's term, is the rub. Somehow, we have to harmonize both sets of Scriptures without diminishing the other set.

Roy (9:00 PM)

For me the mind of Christ is tied into common sense. Why would God create most people only to anguish forever in torment ... unless he is a sadistic god.

Andy (9:06 PM)

Oops, I meant to respond to Rob. But I agree, Roy, it's puzzling to think that God would create most people to anguish forever in torment!

Alan (9:10 PM)

God doesn't create people to anguish forever in torment. I think if there is one thing I'd be willing to "fight" over theologically - it's that.

Roy (9:12 PM)

Great. God could use more defenders. Not that He needs any.

Rob (9:58 PM)

Nah! He needs no defenders! He can well defend himself!

Rob (10:03 AM)

Savior of the world stands alone! Believing is for experiencing one's salvation--not acquiring it!

Ric (10:19 PM)

Spot-on, Rob!

Chapter Eight

Is faith required?

----- Sunday, Jul 25, 2021 -----

Perry (8:06 AM)

The mystery of Christ ... Proverbs 25:2. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter. The key to solving the sin problem is the mystery of Christ. Romans 16:25-27 ...The mystery revealed through Christ so that all MIGHT believe and obey Him. When we rely on Christ, the power of the Spirit will flow through us. New Adam ... Each of us has to choose to either become a part of the new creation, or to remain in the old. Can't have both.

Andy (8:41 AM)

Rob, the savior of the world gave the condition of believing, in order to have life. Below are some of the scriptures you're intentionally or unintentionally diminishing. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:24). "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." (John 6:47). "Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

Ric (11:30 AM)

Tertullian held EP. He was before Augustine. Augie is the "father" of EP... but Tertullian is the "grandfather"! Both were Latin fathers. The Greek fathers, who, were greater in number, did not hold to EP (with only rare exceptions). Most of them clearly held to eventual restoration. Some may have held to annihilation. See my summary of Ramelli's mammoth work:
<http://www.godislovefellowship.com/assets/RamelliDraft84962.pdf>

Rob (1:40 PM)

Proof texts! We all have them! Why do we believe some and not others? My guess is what we believe about God determines what we believe about what motivates our choice of proof texts! I like what I believe about those proof texts, but I'm far more enamored with what say about me and what I have in Christ... and about you!

Ric (3:21 PM)

True! But proof texts boomerang back on all of us!

Rob (3:48 PM)

???

Roy (5:03 PM)

Ditto?

Andy (5:55 PM)

Rob, I noticed that you didn't reply to a single verse I provided from John's Gospel. Doesn't matter though. I believe in all the verses on both sides of this subject. With all love, it's you who doesn't believe in all of them and/or mistakenly interprets the ones on the other side of the isle.

Ric (6:26 PM)

Andy, There is no question that we must believe in order to gain what is often translated "eternal life". Actually these are all cases where aionios is used, which we have already discussed. Just keep in mind that it is literally "indefinite time period life". This can be interpreted as "never-ending life", for sure. But it can also be interpreted as "life associated with the indefinite time period". The difference is that the first interpretation emphasizes the duration of life that comes from belief (forever). The second interpretation focuses on nature of the life that comes from believing (in the realm of God). William Barkley has a great writeup in his book on NT word meanings on aionios and why translators render it "eternal", not for a duration focus, but for an orientation focus. The point is that interpretations legitimately vary from reader to reader of the NT. Also, the verses you quote mention very little about what happens in the case of unbelief, so the focus is on the positive results of belief. Perish and Judgment are, however, mentioned in your proof-text list. But, as I have consistently stated, these kinds of words, in and of themselves, do not require an interpretation that God will do something horrible (torment or annihilation) if some one does not believe. The only thing we know for sure is that unbelief causes us to miss out on something good... an active relationship with our Creator who loves us!

But you have correctly stated to look at "ALL the verses, on all sides." I agree that they are to be taken, at latest, at face value. And they should ALL be allowed to say everything in them....but no more, either! This is a careful balance that takes time and honesty to gain. But it is up to each person to do this... or not! Once I have done all that balancing, I do a sanity check by sitting back and pondering the many verses, but also pondering who I KNOW God to be. It is one thing to know ABOUT God, but to KNOW him is much different. I always compare my intellectual conclusions from the Bible with my long time relationship with my savior, having walked with him and learned of his heart. I am confident in knowing who he CAN, and be CANNOT be and what he can, and cannot do. I look for the God that I know in the bible WITHIN what is written, not apart from it Language is fluid and imprecise, at best. God's Spirit is very accurate. So I seek him in all my understanding. So far, I have found God and the NT to be compatible, as I expected. I find no major contradiction in the things that are clearly stated and who I know him to be.

Andy (6:37 PM)

Agreed. We shouldn't write off verses that appear to contradict our already held positions. For example, all of us believe in the Trinity. Well, why do we do so when God is said to be "one"? Because we harmonize those verses with those that speak of a plurality within God. We don't toss out either set or diminish one set over the other. I'm simply asking Rob, and you and Perry (because you all agree similarly), to

approach this subject the same way you approach the Trinity. Please seek consistency here. Love you guys!

Ric (6:38 PM)

Well said... and, yes, I do my best to harmonize verses, and not read into them nor leave anything out. This is a challenge for any honest student of the Bible. As for the trinity, I do not necessarily hold to what the council of Nicaea concluded beyond what the Bible actually states about the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though I am not a Unitarian, I am sympathetic of their position. They are strict monotheists, whereas Trinitarians flirt with Polytheism in their massive renderings about the "Trinity" that always goes far beyond how things are more simply stated in the NT. It is possible, in my mind, that the one God, being fully omnipresent, manifests himself in what appears as three separate persons. Augustine, for example, wrote more explaining the Trinity than all of the NT combined! Is that a ton of explanation, or speculation? Probably both.

There is no question that faith is required to gain something good from God. It's just a matter of what that is, and whether faith is also required to avoid something horribly bad from God. If we are required to believe in order to prevent God from doing something very bad to us ... then God alone has not saved us from the penalty of sin. Our act of faith does. I appreciate the Bible -- especially the NT. But it is not my final authority. I let that be found in God himself, his character, his high moral excellence, his love, and who he MUST be... who I KNOW him to be, then I look for the God I know in the testimonies (new and Old testaments) of those who came before us. I also give this God that I know, the "benefit of the doubt" before concluding he would do the worst things possible (torment or annihilation) to those He loves so much ... the whole world.

Andy (7:02 PM)

Faith is required to gain something REALLY good from God, namely eternal life. Those verses from John's Gospel prove that without a shadow of doubt. It's verses like those that you guys need to meaningfully harmonize with the other set. If you can't fully understand it, no problem. You don't fully understand the Trinity either.

Rob (7:03 PM)

My answer was in speaking about proof texting. I know all your verses and I don't know how to answer you. I only know what the Trinity has revealed to me about Their finished work!

Ric (7:05 PM)

And so.... after meaningfully harmonizing all verses (pro and con) there is no way I am going to tag God with either "tormentor" or annihilator". Nothing I know of in the NT requires such a conclusion. However, I acknowledge that concluding the other direction (a horrible aspect of God) is a humanly legitimate conclusion and I respect those who do. I do not know God to be someone who solves his problems by violence. And both such practices (torment and annihilation) are the ultimate acts of violence. I only expect such lowly behavior from fallen humans in need of a loving savior!

Andy (7:44 PM)

Rob, I appreciate your honesty. You believe the Trinity has given you a revelation about their finished work, which apparently colors your understanding of texts and makes others unintelligible. That's fine, I love you just the same! Ric, the focus of those verses in John's Gospel was on salvation, not judgment. If you could just step away from the judgement conversation for a second and read those verses about salvation, you'd see that faith is necessary for eternal life. Let's focus on one issue at a time. We can focus on judgement another time. Here are a couple of those verses (with parts emphasized) that stress the absolutely necessary role of faith. "Truly, truly, I say to you, WHOEVER BELIEVES HAS ETERNAL LIFE." (John 6:47). "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that BY BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME." (John 20:30-31).

Roy (8:32 PM)

It seems like the only way to satisfy this discussion is to decide if God loves people unconditionally.

Ric (8:43 PM)

That's good, Roy. Andy... as I have said, there is no question that we gain something good from God by believing. But it is not a reward of warding off horror, it's a result that accompanies belief... fellowship with God. Those are different things. You have also assumed aionios means never-ending. Could be, but not required. So annihilation is not required as the consequence of absence of faith, though it logically could be. I give God benefit of the doubt and do not conclude that he acts violently.... especially when the Bible does not require such a conclusion. No need to, so why would I want to? One more thing... do you really believe, in your heart of hearts, that the God you know and love (and who loves you and your two boys) is an annihilator? Perhaps! Do you easily conclude that he will exercise this kind of ultimate violence on most of his creation that he loves? Perhaps. But what on earth, or in heaven, would require him (or make him want to) do such a terrible thing? I cannot think of any! The NT certainly does not require such a conclusion, so why draw it? I totally respect Andy's right to conclude that God is an annihilator, just as I respect Perry's right to conclude he is a tormentor. And, it is possible (from a finite human view) that either of you COULD be right. But why conclude such horrible things about God, when the NT does not require either conclusion, and uses words that are inconclusive (like "destroy"), and never mentions "hell" in the Greek text? What is the motive? And even if the NT were conclusive, why choose to dogmatically trust ancient writings, who's reliability cannot be proven? Seems like foolish ground to stand on when making such horrible accusations about God who has proven himself to be love! Has he not? He has proven it to me!

----- Monday, Jul 26, 2021 -----

Perry (5:39 AM)

Those ancient writings are the inspired word of God

Rob (7:29 AM)

Who says so, Perry? Did God say so?

Ric (7:40 AM)

Could be, Perry. But where is the evidence? It is easy to make claims and keep repeating them. The bible, as a collection of ancient writings, but also has a lot of problems. Even Daniel Wallace, and other like him, admit this. Andy and I will be going thru a book by these Evangelicals, called Myths and Mistakes. You are welcome to join us. But you must be prepared to face facts and not just repeat indoctrination in your head. This is not easy! I have traveled this journey, as you well know. But I will never go back you self-inflicted censorship. I'm getting to be like Sgt Friday... "just the facts, mam".

Andy (7:42 AM)

Ric, "Destroy" can be quite conclusive, like when the Pharisees conspired to "destroy" Jesus in Matthew 12:14. I don't suppose (and neither do any of us) that they conspired to destroy Jesus by simply doing away with his fleshly nature or having loving fellowship with him. They conspired to destroy Jesus by killing him. PS - Love you Ric, even though you can drive me nuts! Yes, again we gain something great (according to Jesus)... eternal life! "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." - John 6:47. Also, yes, I'm assuming that "aionios" in Jesus' above statement means never-ending life. I grant that it could semantically refer simply to a long life. Let's say that's true. Since believing is necessary for eternal life (according to Jesus), then if anyone quits believing in "eternity" they'll be annihilated or tormented forever. That could be true. I grant the possibility. With that, have a blessed and believing day my brothers!

Ric (8:41 AM)

If "destroy" is conclusive to you... then you MUST believe God to be an "annihilator" of those he soooo loves, and are made in his image, and are of infinite value to him ... like your two boys are to you. Worship God with this in mind, and thank him for all he is, including his annihilating attribute ... and then go warn everyone you meet that they need to do something (believe) or they face God doing something horribly violent to them. I respect your conclusion, and I affirm you in it as my equal before God, both drawing our differing conclusions by faith.

Rob (9:28 AM)

Ric drives me nuts, too, and we mostly agree! Ha!

Ric (9:30 AM)

Takes one to know one... and proud of it! God made us all different and unique. Once we appreciate his creative diversity, we are home free in relationships.

Rob (9:34 AM)

None of us would ever do what we claim God will do but we give Him a pass because we can't talk Him out of doing it! If Hitler hadn't committed suicide, we would have strung him up in a heartbeat. But we applaud a view of God that is infinitely worse than Hitler's vile doings!

Perry (10:08 AM)

There are OT and NT verses saying that what is written is inspired by God. Jesus taught Saul/Paul for 14 years. You read Enns, Ehrman and the like, and they all drift away from the truth. Don't kid yourself. The Bible is the inspired word of God. Come judgement day what are you going to say to God about that?

Ric (10:21 AM)

We all kid ourselves about something, Perry. The goal is to discover what. As for what I will say to God, I will say I was being honest about the limited verification he provided concerning the Bible. He will smile and say, "I know, child. I limited the info about the Bible to grow your faith. I wanted your trust, not your certainty!" I got that gem from Peter Enns in his fine book, "The Sin of Certainty." Check it out sometime, if you dare. Don't just make a list of authors and books you deem "bad" and fail to "examine everything carefully" as Paul exhorts us to do. If someone came up and told me that I must believe God is an annihilator, or else he will annihilate me ... why would I want to trust such a God? It would make more sense to not believe, and get annihilated, and not take any chances! What a contrast this is to telling people that can fully trust God because he loves them and will never abandon them, annihilate them, or torment them. When I play music at assisted living, am I to threaten all these old folks waiting to die, with annihilation or torment by God, if they do not believe he is the kind of God who does such horrible violence? No... I sing them "Over the Rainbow" and tell them the good news that God loves them and will never forsake them no matter what, and that they can fully trust him! What would you tell them? What DO you tell people? What kind of a God do you tell them about? I tell them of a God, their Creator, who I am fully proud of in every respect, and who I am not ashamed of in any way. Am I a heretic and false teacher for thinking so highly of God? Many think I am, and have told me so. This is great and important stuff about God, guys ... one way or the other. No? Alan and I will have lunch sometime this week. Anyone want to join us? Let's talk about either how wonderful or terrible (or both) God is! Seems important.

Alan (10:27 AM)

Heretic is the most over-used (poorly understood and applied) word in the Evangelical vocabulary.

Andy (10:39 AM)

Ric, we all should do what Paul did: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." (Colossians 1:28)

Ric (12:42 PM)

Amen, Andy. Great verse! And is there any warning in there about God doing something horrible to them if they fail to believe? I do not see any. So why do so many Christians assume this when they are not required to? And yes, Alan, the real definition of heretic is not well known. It was not a bad word, originally. It just meant "to choose" (chose one idea or teacher over another). This is why Paul had to add "destructive" when he used the word heretic in a negative way. "Heretic" became a negative term in the early 4th century, after the fighting in the church broke out when Constantine declared Christianity no longer illegal. We use it today in this same negative sense. I can always tell when people feel their arguments are no longer holding up or making sense ... they always resort to name-calling and labeling. Discovering truth starts with honesty about the facts ... all the facts. Otherwise, you just inherit someone else's take on what is true! Andy sent me yet another good video debate. He has been one of my best

sources of new info this past year. He introduced me to Viola, Boyd, Giles, and others. Here is his latest debate link. I'm onto it now! (https://youtu.be/ZuZPPGvF_2l)


Roy (4:20 PM)

On Col 1:28, what does it mean to be mature in Christ? I'm asking for "a friend". Ha!

Perry (4:37 PM)

Good question Roy. Recognize Christ as the supreme power, don't make it all about you, and being mature in Christ? Loving God! But then right after that ... Fear God and be thankful. Psalms tells us that is the #1 thing God wants to hear from us is: Be thankful. Carry out the Great Commission: To glorify God, and make disciples of all nations. Be disciplined but forgive. Be generous. Now, a mature Christian balances out grace and truth. On a side note, along the journey to become mature, new words will have new meaning. Hope, Compassion, Appreciation, Peace of mind. And here is what I tell my son: You will discover meaning and purpose in your life.

Ric (4:47 PM)

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Looks like Andy cannot make it this week to talk about the Mistakes book. Next week more likely. Anyone can join. I will buy a copy for anyone who will read it. Pastor Alan? Jesuit Perry? Minister Rob? Bishop Roy? Ha! Reverend Andy already has one. A real eye opener! A slap in the face with reality. Sometimes it's what we need to get real!

Andy (5:27 PM)

Shouldn't Rob be "Elder Rob"?

Ric (5:29 PM)

Yes! He gets the Sr. Prize.

Roy (5:30 PM)

Buy me one. Thanks...I'll pay you back.

Ric (5:34 PM)

Free if you read it, Roy! Anyone else?

Rob (6:05 PM)

Me thinks I can vouch for Ric not taking offense in his scuffle with church leaders 6 years ago. But I was really surprised at the "offense" they took! His concern was far more for them than anything about himself! I had been down that road before and was not surprised at all at their reactions. Although I haven't heard the whole Ehrman debate, it's actually kind of boring. Even if it could be proven that the whole Bible is reliable and accurate, it would still take a belief in God for any of the truth to be made real to the reader! And if the whole Bible were proven to be false, it would change nothing with me! I came to the knowledge of God by looking at the universe and my body, and declared Him to exist. Then, I wanted to get to know Him! I started with the Bible. I asked God to teach me. He has, is, and will continue that for eternity! The

Bible dispenses info -- the Holy Spirit teaches me truth! It makes no difference to me how Judas died. I can ask him that when I see him! PS. I "believed" in Jesus as far back as I can remember with no peace. But when I dropped myself into His lap, peace flooded my soul and has never left! God did that, not the Bible (helpful as it is).

Ric (6:10 PM)

Well said, Rob! I fully agree. Pretty much my story, too. And it took me 60 years! But God has also provided, in the Bible, a "reasonably reliable" historic record for our edification ... and for our prompting to go talk to him! I saw a fellow believer this AM in the coffee shop. The subject of eternal destiny came up. We talked a while. He texted me later and was angry that anyone could believe that God could, or would, save all humanity. Why is it that people get angry about God saving everyone (which is logically what would be expected of a loving savior), yet they do NOT get angry that God would torment or annihilate most of those He created and supposedly loves? What the heck is with that logic? What is really behind the anger?

Rob (6:12 PM)

Sure, and I look to the Bible for more info -- some of it hidden, right in plain sight! Not bad logic -- simply our "flesh" from Adam, blaming the other guy! I make no claim to be any better than Hitler in my flesh nor better than he in my new creation, because Hitler and I both possess the old man in the flesh and the new man in Christ. BTW, Jesus is crucified afresh every time someone asks to be born again!

Ric (6:17 PM)

Thanks for the validation, Rob. I even surprised myself! I learned a lot about love over those 60 years... the hard way. But, man oh man, did that serve me well in that nightmare situation. But it demonstrated to me the power of love, in me from Jesus, over all other forces! The angrier they got, the more I loved them, because I saw that was what they needed... love, not arguing. And the more I loved them, the angrier they got. I can only guess why, but I think they knew in their hearts that "love wins" ... not the argument, but the heart! It was the most unique situation I have ever been in. I ponder it, and all I learned in it ... often. God is soooo good, in everything he does and allows! I agree, Rob, the debate is a little stuffy for most folks. But I always enjoy them. My real goal is not to argue against the bible! I have appreciated the heck out of this wonderful book for the past 40 years. Instead, I just want people to be real about what it is ... and isn't.

Unfortunately, the modern-day church has presented it as equal with God. We call it God's Word, and we even say "when it speaks, God speaks". God's word comes from God, for sure, and not any book. Reading the Bible may very well prompt God's Word within us. But that is very different. That is the active work of the Holy Spirit, not the work of an impersonal set of ancient writings! Never confuse the two. Ultimately, God's word is Jesus! The NT makes this abundantly clear. The Bible just points us to him and tells us about him. Where, when, and how did we ever get such a notion that the Bible is "The Word of God"? Not from the Bible! The Bible does not even know about itself (as a completed, specific volume of writings. These came from men in church history! Few churches would ever allow such factual information (like all this) about the history of the bible to ever be told. It's funny that people love and revere

the Bible, but are very ignorant about how it came about and its reliability. Even a "Bible" church is not interested in such important things. Very strange! Another gem from Andy: <https://youtu.be/KOIhbZOZj50>

Rob (6:35 PM)

I love the Bible! It contains stuff I want to know about the Trinity and about me! But most of all, it tells me about my relationship and fellowship with Papa (the Father). The HS tells me what's true!

Ric (6:35 PM)

I will listen tonight to that debate tonight, Andy. Thanks. It looks, at first glance, that James White defends reliability of the bible, but all one-sided. But it should be worth watching, anyway. Rob ... The "trinity" is in the Bible? Are you sure? That came from the council of Nicaea in 325 AD (in the advanced, detailed form we teach today)! You will not find that kind of detail about a Trinity in the Bible. Stick with the Apostle's Creed. It just says, "I believe in the Father ... the Son ... and the Holy Spirit. They never try to explain what the NT never does. Originally, the council of Nicaea vowed to use only the language of the NT. But they could not argue successfully against other believers (who they decided were heretics) by using just the NT wording! So, hey introduced new words -- words beyond those used by NT writers -- words like: "Son of God, begotten of the Father the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father." Many have rightly asked, "Were the guys who won the arguments in church history just heretics who were better articulators and just larger in number?" Many people win arguments because they have the gift of gab and sound so sure of themselves. Paul never depended on these techniques. He spells out where the power of his truth lies, and certainly not in himself or and gifts he had. It was always in the holy Spirit working through hejhis weakness and human inabilities. See the last three chapters of 2Cor.

Alan (6:40 PM)

James White ... not my favorite!

Rob (6:50 PM)

Yeppers!

Ric (7:02 PM)

Oh, come on, Alan and Rob. Examine everything carefully! Ha!

Rob (7:04 PM)

Just read 1Cor 13 again and cannot believe that some of you really believe God is not patient, kind and long suffering! And that he is arrogant, rude, self-seeking, and keeps a record of wrongs. And that His love ends. And that old line that "He loves them, even in hell", just won't wash! Read 1Cor 13:4-7 as though it was God saying it -- I dare you!

Ric (7:08 PM)

My friend from the coffee shop is now angry in his texts. I sent him a lot of info that we have kicked around in this text group over the past few weeks. He told me I was deceived. This is usually where people go (along with labeling, and name-calling) when they struggle to find a good defense, and things

they are against start making sense. Here is what I wrote him, totally in love: "Spend some time getting to know God, personally... not just through the Bible. You will learn, first hand, his loving and gentle heart, and his non-violent ways. The violence you see is not of God, but man. You know this. And that is the point... he is not a big version of man who is violent and angry. He is the exact opposite. Get to know him, learn to love him, and learn to unconditionally love others (as he does). Your life will change, and you will experience real joy, peace and freedom. Do you have that and experience it fully, today? You will never go back, if you ever do know God as he really is. And, you will lament ... 'why did I wait so long to quit doubting who God really is!' No more fighting, arguing, calling people deceived, or any other practice that robs you of peace and joy. Happy to talk more about this anytime. The subject is endless, yet completely satisfying. Ask, seek, knock... and the door will be opened. Spend time with God... just you and him. No Bible, no church, no Ric. Just you and your savior! I love you, bro. I really do!" He is a long-time friend of over 40 years!

Rob (7:13 PM)

I Cor 12:31 is such a powerful verse. After reading the whole chapter 12, and then 13. I could live in those two chapters!

Andy (7:17 PM)

Ric, I'd probably just choose to use the word "mistaken", rather than angry. It is strange to think though that people would actually get angry about God saving everyone.

Ric (7:19 PM)

Oh, trust me. People do get angry. I have experienced it a lot. Not from John Q Public, but from people who are close to me (family, friends, church) that feel "betrayed" that I no longer hold their extreme view as the only correct one. Some just disagree, but I have not met many. My texting friend is typical of strongly indoctrinated Evangelicals. (The more strongly indoctrinated, the angrier – has been my experience). Church leaders are often of this type, but some clearly are not. Depends on the person, their temperament, and how seriously they hold their views. Try sharing pure grace, and watch the tempers flare with some Christians. The leaders I tangled with 6 years ago were angry over my just suggesting that God MIGHT save everyone! I was not at all dogmatic about it. This is why it is so curious. But I found only Evangelicals seem to get mad about this. Not all of them, but only them... well some Catholics too (who Evangelicals came from!). Unbelievers do not get mad about this. They just don't believe it.

Rob (7:26 PM)

May I ask what your response is to 1Cor 13, Andy?

Andy (7:42 PM)

Rob, response to reading your comments on 1Cor 13? Something else?

Ric (7:46 PM)

Hey guys ... let's take 1Cor 13 out for a test drive with our three views of eternal destiny. It is very telling. Read each test drive below, completely and carefully! Which one fits best?

Eternal Punishment is patient, Eternal Punishment is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Eternal Punishment does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Eternal Punishment does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Eternal Punishment never fails.

Annihilation is patient, Annihilation is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Annihilation does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Annihilation does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Annihilation never fails.

Restoration is patient, Restoration is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Restoration does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Restoration does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Restoration never fails.

Andy (8:12 PM)

Let's also take Romans 3:23 for a test drive. Which one is what Scripture says? For the wages of sin is DEATH, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. For the wages of sin is RESTORATION, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. For the wages of sin is ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Which do you guys think Paul meant?

Roy (8:14 PM)

Include me. I taught each point (for a 16 point series in 1Cor 13) and concluded this is a description of God's unconditional love. I ask all of you guys to find any point of God's conditional love that fits extreme punishment.

Ric (8:20 PM)

Maybe you got the test drive wrong, Andy. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is Restoration." Sin results in death, for sure, it does not result in restoration. Jesus does that. Why assume that when "death" is used in Rom 3:23, that it means annihilation? Plus, the whole goal in salvation is to raise people from death caused by sin. Why can't God save everyone in this way? Everyone will be raised, according to Jesus! Why do you so choose to tag God with horrible results, when you are not required to do so? What is your motive? Is it impossible to believe that God actually pulls off saving the world, which was clearly his goal in the NT? Is it that hard to believe he cannot fail in accomplishing his desire that all be saved? Why render God so small and incompetent? Man ... this is great stuff, guys! I am figuring a lot of things out. I could not do it without you. I hope all of you are sorting things out in the way God leads you, also. I never question that in others. I just have questions FOR others!

Andy (8:30 PM)

My motive is to let all of scripture speak. I'm fine with holding ideas in tension. I love you three restorationists, but from what I've observed, you guys are not willing to let all of scripture speak on this

subject. You do for the Trinity, or at least its concept that God is one and somehow three. But you do not allow all of scripture to speak on this subject of eternal destiny. Again, please seek consistency.

Ric (8:33 PM)

Andy, you have concluded that we “do not let scripture speak”, because we disagree with you? As far as I know, I let it speak, and so does Rob and Roy. But we all interpret it differently than you, and for different reasons. This is not the same as “not letting it speak”. That is a very severe indictment on your part, and I do not assume the same of you. I respect your interpretation, and do not see mine as better (or worse) than yours ... just different. And be careful with “you guys”! I do not agree with Rob and Roy on everything, nor do they with me... not even about restoration! One man's consistency is another man's error. That's just the way it is. All we can do is keep talking and keep loving....or not! Happy to discuss why I believe I am being consistent. I may not be, but I honestly believe I am....or I would abandon it. This is why I am always open to other views. But I naturally ask questions... as you should of me.

Alan (8:40 PM)

Yeah letting scripture speak for itself assumes quite a bit. In the example of Rom. 3:23 what is meant by death? Or “eternal life,” for that matter. Or even “justification,” or, or, or...

Ric (8:43 PM)

Amen, Alan! Now you are asking good questions. we tend to read into those terms whatever we have been taught... things that are not necessarily in the text. This is why I ask people why they draw horrible conclusions about God, when the text itself does not require them to do so. It may allow such conclusions, but it does not require them. So why tag God with the worst possible things, like torment and annihilation?

Ric (8:50 PM)

My other friend, on the other text, has just blocked my number and does not want me to encourage him to go see God alone, without me or the bible. A most curious response!

Alan (8:51 PM)

Wow that is horrible response. You're not a monster!

Ric (8:50 PM)

My friend is no monster either. But his flesh is. So is mine! Only Jesus frees us from bondage. Perhaps I am a monster to him, in this moment. But that's ok. I love this guy. He is a long-time friend. He is stuck in religion and does not seem to be free. His angry response proves it. You would think encouraging someone to go seek God would make a person happy. But not if they love their bondage, and many people do, so it makes them mad. Well, they may not love bondage – they may just be used to it. and so it seems feels to them. I think many people are afraid of freedom!

Andy (9:00 PM)

Ric, first off, I was speaking to one specific subject where you three absolutely do agree. Second, there's no other way to meaningfully understand verses such as John 20:30-31, which teach that faith is

absolutely necessary to be saved. Yet, you three definitely deny such an idea. That may sound severe but it's what I've observed throughout our texts. I won't shy away from truth because we're friends. I also would never shun you because we disagree. Here's John 20:30-31: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that BY BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME."

Ric (8:50 PM)

Good verse, and all three of us believe it right along with you. But in that verse, and all the others you offer, we do not see anything that requires God to do something horrible to people in retaliation against them for not believing. Do you see anything in that verse of that nature?

Alan (9:03 PM)

Here is a video that articulates what I think. States it better than I can. (<https://youtu.be/1gx2LJKn-zA>)

Ric (9:05 PM)

Alright, Alan. You've introduced a new subject with that video ... the extent of atonement! Great subject. Who did Jesus die for, and what did he actually accomplish? Very key! I will watch it tonight. Thanks.

Alan (9:09 PM)

Wait don't punt to the extent of the atonement - the point I am making is the condition. What was the condition of the atonement? ... repent and believe!

Ric (9:10 PM)

Is that the subject of the video? If so, I will watch for it.

Alan (9:11 PM)

That's the point I think Andy is making - go back and watch the video and the illustration the speaker makes about the condition for the atonement. It's only 2:49 long.

Ric (9:11 PM)

Yes, that is a condition. But for what result? To prevent God from doing something bad in the absence of belief? I will watch it. Thanks.

Andy (9:13 PM)

Ric, please answer yes or no ... Do you believe any condition (like repenting, believing, etc.) is necessary in order to be saved?

Alan (9:13 PM)

Well, my answer is: going back to Romans 6:23, it's death ... wages of sin is death. That is the result.

Roy (9:14 PM)

Most of you nay-sayers are theological chickens. Who among you wants to describe God's unconditional love and unlimited grace? I bet non

Andy (9:16 PM)

Sorry guys if I'm keeping you up... Ric, what do you say? Yes or no?

Ric (9:24 PM)

Again. You are confusing me with Rob. Make sure you read each person carefully, and respond particularly. Quit thinking in terms of "you guys" collectively. My answer has always been: YES. The NT is clear!

Andy (9:29 PM)

Ric, it is "you guys" on this one. You believe everyone is already saved. By necessity that means no condition at all needs to be met by anyone in order to be saved. That is the view that you, Roy, and Rob hold. That's why on this particular subject it's "you guys". And I love you guys!

Alan (9:32 PM)

I love you all too - even those I haven't met, yet ... like Perry.

Roy (9:32 PM)

Read Roman's Five. Everyone was tossed into Adam and salvation plan, Everyone was tossed into Jesus and all saved. Most of you can't handle how much God loves His creation.

Ric (9:33 PM)

Andy, I was not clear to you. So you asked and I answered. But you assume a lot when you wrote, "You believe everyone is already saved. By necessity that means no condition at all needs to be met by anyone in order to be saved." Lets take it one part at a time. (1) "everyone is already saved": True, if you mean "saved" (delivered) from the PENALTY of sin which is death. Jesus said, "All who are in the graves will be raised in the resurrection on the Last Day." But, no, everyone is not saved (delivered) from the POWER (daily entanglement) of sin in this life. To remedy that, we must believe and engage actively with God through the HS. (2) "no condition at all needs to be met by anyone": True, if you mean a condition by God to ward off his doing something horrible to the unbeliever (who has not met the condition of belief). But false, if you mean no condition is required to have a spiritual life with God... faith is required for that. How could anyone have an active relationship with someone they do not believe in? You are combining one condition, belief, with two different kinds of salvation (deliverance). Salvation from sin and death (the penalty of sin) has no requirement. This is completely done by Jesus on the cross by grave alone, with no works or earning (even by our faith). And yes, faith is in there, as you always point out, but it is the means by which we appropriate and experience the salvation (from sin, death, and penalty) that humanity already have in Jesus (the second, and final, "Adam"). What the first Adam lost for humanity, Jesus regained for all humanity (last half of Rom 5). You will need to ask Rob for his take on all this. I do not know if we believe the same. So "you guys" may not always fit. I have not denied any verses. Have I? You assumed that. I just interpret them differently, and I do not see anything in the words themselves that are used in the

NT that requires me to conclude that God will do something horrible if people do not meet his condition of belief. Hope this clears things up, on my side anyway.

Andy (9:42 PM)

Ric, I know what you believe. I've read your booklet. I've had numerous discussions with you on this subject. You, Roy, and Rob believe that everyone is already saved because Jesus is an actual savior as opposed to a potential savior (to use your language). You guys hold the same position here. There's nothing to argue about. It's truth.

Ric (9:47 PM)

We can talk in detail, as much as you want, next time you come! I hold to all verses at face value. I try to read nothing in, nor leave anything out. But there is the matter of interpretation, which will honestly differ from one person to another. The word "salvation" is an example. We can talk about this when you come. It is like the word "destroy" (and many other words). The words themselves do not have theological meaning. But meanings are concluded sometimes by some people, and often that meaning is imposed on the words used in the NT. And that is OK. they can do this as how they interpret what they read. And you can impose dogma on such theological impositions, but they are not rigidly conclusive. The words themselves are not capable of this. This is why I ask people why they choose to conclude the worst about God, when the text itself does not require it! But you accused me of denying verses. That I do not do. I just interpret them differently.

Also, I have stated many times, that I am not dogmatic about what I believe. Rob is, and that's OK. I place views in order of likelihood, and allow other positions, like yours and Perry's, to be valid options. You are wrongly placing me in Rob's dogma camp. I do not reside there (he will tell you that). If you read my puny writings carefully, you will see this reflected repeatedly. So if you are looking for a good argument with a worthy opponent... see Rob. I just ask a lot of questions. Go back and look! I never claim to be right. I only state what I believe, why, and freely admit I CAN be wrong. These are words ("I can be wrong") could not pass the lips of the leader I tangled with six years ago otherwise I would still be there! The problem was not that I was dogmatic about my beliefs, but that I wasn't dogmatic enough about theirs! Such a strange world within the church. But our love must reign supreme. Lets keep talking, asking questions, learning, and not worry if others agree with us. We are all free in Jesus and need not hold each other theologically accountable. Right? Have fun in Jesus!

Andy (10:06 PM)

I love you bro, even if we disagree. Let's have fun in Jesus indeed!

Rob (10:07 PM)



Ric (10:18 PM)

Amen, bro's! "If two people think exactly the same thing... one of them is not thinking!" -- Walter Martin.

Rob (10:25 PM)

Andy, did you answer my question about your response to ultimate restoration for all? Ric is correct -- he rarely is dogmatic about anything. Like a flea on a hot griddle, he is hard to pin down. Me, I'm easy. I state my dogmatism and I also state what I have no clear answers to. Here's some more dogmatism: God is humble. God is less free than we are! There are things God can't do! You might be happier to write me off this group! Ha!

Chapter Nine

Does anyone *really* believe in annihilation or torment by God?

----- Tuesday, Jul 27, 2021 -----

Andy (8:20 AM)

Good morning brothers! This is one long text but in it are responses to Ric, Rob, Roy, and Alan, in that order. Ric: I don't care much to rehash last night's discussion, so I'll leave it here. My aim was to point out the necessity of believing in order to be saved. That's why I quoted John 20:30-31, which does teach the necessity of faith for eternal life. Further, I said "you guys" because Rob and Roy believe that everyone is already saved because of what Jesus did on the cross, and, from what you've expressed (both in your book and in numerous texts), you believe the same. Using "you guys" then was simply an easy way of grouping you three together on this one specific subject. Notice not on every subject but this one subject. (I particularized it in my initial text. Please see it above if you're unsure.) Anyway, here's what you wrote last Friday. (See the "2:54" time stamp and your text beginning with "Yep."): Quote... "This is where the solution is... in what God does, not in man repenting, (before or after the cross). People are told to believe, under the new covenant, because they have already been reconciled by Christ on the cross... not because in believing they save themselves." In the above statement when referring to salvation, you downplay man's need to repent and/or believe in order to be saved. This is made clear when you write "because they have already been reconciled by Christ on the cross..." You see, I'm simply going off of your words. The clear implication of everyone having "already been reconciled by Christ on the cross" nullifies any real need to repent and/or believe in order to be saved. This is the view Roy and Rob hold to. That's why I said "you guys." It wasn't meant as a put down. If you took it that way, please forgive me. It was used because you guys do believe similarly about all having already been reconciled by Christ on the cross, and ultimately that to repent and/or to believe in Christ is not necessary in order to be saved. Anyhow, I don't care to travel down this road any further via text (it would be better in person as you suggested), but, of course, feel free to share how I might have misunderstood your words in your above quoted text. I may not respond though until we meet in person to discuss Myths and Mistakes. Happy reading until then! I will address Rob, Roy and Alan next.

Ric (10:18 PM)

Andy, read again what I wrote yesterday. That was about as clear as I can make it. But let me sum up once more what I believe and do not believe. God does, indeed, have a condition on salvation, but only salvation from the PENALTY of sin, which is death. The proof is that Jesus said all will be raised on the Last Day, in the resurrection. That condition of faith does not apply to warding off God doing something horrible to people (annihilation or torment), but only to engaging with him in an active relationship through the HS. Clearly, in the NT, the word "save" is used in many ways. Women or saved in childbirth, etc. This does not mean they will not be annihilated or tormented as a result! So "saved" must be interpreted. I interpret saved from sin and death as God removing any penalty that would otherwise result, and that Jesus fully took care of their "sin" (not sins) problem on the cross. You and Alan are free to interpret saved, destroy, and perish as having to do with annihilation (just as Perry can as never-ending torment). But the words themselves, in Greek, do not require this, and my question to you (and all Evangelicals) is: Why do you choose to place god in such horrible light and tag him with such terrible things, when the NT does not require you to do so?" If anyone in the universe deserves "benefit of the doubt", it would be

God... especially with all we know about his love, grace, goodness, mercy, holiness (perfection) and his clear intentions to love and save the whole world. Certainly, any justice, judgement and condemnation must be in accord with who we know him be. Hope this helps.

Andy (8:20 AM)

Rob: I need to read that passage (1Cor 13) as if it was God saying it... is that what you're asking about? I did read it. I'd say that passage would definitely point to a restorative God if: (1) God was declaring it about himself. (2) if it was God's one and only self-disclosure. It's not either #1 or #2. But thanks for the recommended reading lens. Roy: That's a good passage to bring to the table to support your view. I believe it's one of the strongest restorative passages. I do have an answer for it: It could be a little confusing over text though, so maybe over coffee and some fellowship, next time I'm up? Alan: Thanks for the video clip link. I agree with Mr. Allen, that though Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, and that a faith response is necessary in order to partake of that salvation Jesus won at the cross. This view harmonizes both biblical truths of Jesus' death for the sins of the world, and man's need to respond in faith. Grace and peace to you all!

Rob (8:26 AM)

Andy: Oh yeah! Where is that lens of yours? And Good Morning back at ya!

Ric (8:28 AM)

Ok, Andy. You now have the sparing opponent you seek... in Rob. Ha! I'm not a worthy opponent. In fact, I'm not an opponent at all. All I have opinions, not dogma. But I believe things to be true ... and I know why! I'm confident in my beliefs, for myself, but I do not impose them on others. However, I do ask a lot of questions. Enjoy your exchange with Rob. Keep in mind that I do not conclude everything he does. And, many of the things we agree on, I do not hold as strongly as Rob does. Do not confuse or combine us... except as brothers who love each other dearly.

Rob (8:37 AM)

How's that for distancing oneself from another? That's ok, I've been by myself before. I am not herd-bound ,but I welcome any who would join a walk into the path less trodden. Sock it to me!

Ric (8:39 AM)

Andy. Thanks for your summary. You assume a lot and read a lot into my words. And this is the problem with what all of us do with the Bible ... we read what we want into it. You assume a lot about the word "salvation", as you do about "destroy". That's ok, but do not assume I conclude the same meanings of those words that you do. I suggest we talk this thru in real time, live. Texting is limited. I am, for sue, inconsistent in your mind as you try to fit my conclusions into your assumptions. And that will never work. So, in that way, I AM indeed inconsistent with your beliefs. I plead guilty! See you in town next time you come. Ps... the funny thing is that I get the same "inconsistency" complaint from Rob! And for the same reasons. This should tell you something about the nature of inconsistency. Distinguishing is not the same as distancing. That's what I do. But I realize I am, at times, inconsistent in my thinking. That's why I need dear brother like you and Rob *and all in the group) to change my thinking. And that you all do, very well.

Rob (8:52 AM)

Yes, we are as close as brothers, Ric, but in this case, distancing and distinguishing are the same thing regarding one's beliefs. I'm ok with that. And I'm ok with the other brothers as well. They are all welcome in my periphery any time with no restrictions!

Ric (8:55 AM)

You are always entitled to your opinion on how you perceive things. But you really have no jurisdiction on how they are actually given by me. That is for me to decide (and for you to decide on your end). I distinguish in love.!

Rob (10:03 AM)

You are free to think what you will! Lunch anyone?

Alan (10:05 AM)

I am glad you're all my brothers. I am thankful that Ric thought enough of me to include me in this group.

Ric (10:06 AM)

You are a welcome and valued contributor. I always enjoy our lunches together!

Rob (10:07 AM)

It is a rather eclectic group, to say the least! Who knows what may come from it? From kids to old codgers; from Arminians and Fundies to Ultimate Resters!

Ric (12:25 PM)

Andy and Alan.... perhaps this will explain why I agree to the conditionalism of faith in the verses you quote, yet do not agree with you on what they mean: Salvation in Greek simply means "to deliver". There is no theological meaning attached to that word. It does not mean, "delivered from hell" (or annihilation). However, it CAN mean either of these things, if the writer uses it in this way. But it is not required to mean this! So, context, local and broader, is key. But since Paul does not provide a commentary, the verse must be interpreted and this is a subjective process. I see no clear reason to assume "saved" means "saved from God doing something bad to people after death". Instead, I take "saved" and "destroy" to be associated with this life. Any eternal consequences of death are taken care of by Jesus on the cross (by his raising from death, and guaranteeing everyone else will too.) Now, is it legitimate to associate saved and destroy with torment and annihilation? Sure!, and many do so. Alan, Andy, and Perry do so, and they are in good company. But I do not because it goes against who God is presented to be in the NT. I do not hold this view dogmatically, only preferably. I do not consider opposing views to be wrong and feel no obligation to persuade people otherwise. I do, however ask questions and explain why I believe as I do. The point is that I am not necessarily inconsistent with those verses anymore than anyone else. But CAN I be? Sure! But that applies to everyone. Hope this helps. More detail when you come.

One more thing to discuss... well, questions I have, is: What is the nature of the faith you believe saves people from God's wrath? How much faith required? What degree of sincerity is required? How continuous must one's faith be? How much good works are required to prove faith is genuine? (see James

2). What tenants of faith are required, and which ones are not? What age is required for accountability of the requirement? What mental ability is required? It gets messy, and it is all on the shoulders of the believer to bear in order to avoid God doing something bad to them if they don't get it right! Seems a long way from grace! And what is our message to unbelievers, if Andy and I, Alan and I, or Perry and I minister together? We have very different "good news" messages. I require nothing of them, because God does not (to escape a bad eternity). Your message puts everything on them, because you believe God does require something of them to escape his wrath against them. I tell them my full message, unhesitatingly. Do you tell them yours, or do you hide the details like having a "crazy uncle in the basement" that you are ashamed of? I am not accusing, just asking what you tell people, and when! I quit presenting God as one who "offers" and "threatens", a long time ago. I now present him as one who "invites" people to come and believe in him, because of what he has ALREADY done for them as a finished work, and as One who will never forsake them in any manner. I'm never going back to a puny view of God. But that is just what I have decided to do. I respect other approaches. I just do not want to join them.

Perry (5:41 PM)

In my mind, salvation means saving one from the consequences of sin ... its power and effects. Big difference between that and saying salvation means to deliver. I thought my mail man delivers!

Ric (5:43 PM)

Well said. I agree with that fully, Perry!

Rob (5:47 PM)

Do you still sin?

Ric (6:23 PM)

Not sure who you are asking, Rob. Seems like an obvious answer. John said, "if we say we are without sin, we fool ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Then he follows with an exhortation to confess our sin, and God will be faithful to forgive. Looks like another conditional statement. And it is. The NT is full of them! The question is what is the consequence of failing to meet the condition... not are there any!

Perry (6:49 PM)

But your take on salvation goes one way, and mine goes another. Mine implies something from consequences ... conscious eternal punishment is that consequence!

Andy (7:19 PM)

Ric, if you and I, or you and Alan were sharing the good news together, we probably would share the Gospel slightly differently. We might tell them to repent and believe in the Gospel like Jesus did (Mark 1:15), and you, by your own admission, would require nothing of them. Hmm... I wonder if any others in this group would also require nothing of them??

Ric (7: 25 PM)

Yes, I would tell them nothing is required of them to ward off God doing something horrible to them after they die. But I would also tell them they must believe this is true in order for them to engage with God,

actively, in a loving fellowship with him. As I have said many times, I do not hold that there are no requirement, only what the consequences are. I tell people that need to repent and believe. The NT makes this clear. It is repeated ad-nauseum in Acts. But repent just means “change of mind”. So they need to change their mind and believe because they are already “saved” (delivered) from all penalty of sin by Jesus in his finished work for them on the cross. The kind of salvation (deliverance) they get from believing is from the power of sin in their lives (the entanglement of sin). Big difference.

Perry (8:00 PM)

Believe and repent! All blessings come through Christ!

Ric (8:02 PM)

Perry... another gem from you: "Believe and repent. All blessings come through Christ". Amen, bro!

Rob (8:10 PM)

How could I require anything when I am equally guilty? How can God require anything when He forgave them/us? God never even imputed our sins to us!

Ric (8:22 PM)

I can only tell you what I believe, and why. My reasons are simple: The NT does not spell out any of the three views, unambiguously. All views have to add words to express the view and distinguish it from the other views. And we all do this by interpreting the words we have in verses that are not as conclusive as our views are. I choose my view from the three (and all three are reasonable and possible), based on what I see elsewhere in the NT about God, his high moral character, and his clear intention and plan to save all humanity. If any of the verses spelled out, unambiguously, any of the three views, I would hold that one! But they don't. And the fact that that all of us, who love God and each other sincerely disagree, is proof of this. (Though I suspect that Rob will say his view is clear as a bell. And, to him ... it is!) So I look for God as being good, perfect, loving, and faithful. Only one view, for me, fits that. But the other views are indeed possible, based on the somewhat inconclusive nature of the verses. This is why my question to people is always: “Why do you choose a horrible view of God, when you can choose a better one, since the verses do not REQUIRE a horrible view?” Destroy, salvation, aionios, and other words in the NT are not conclusive about any view. Happy to go over this in detail with any of you, any time, if you ever want to. But if you are satisfied with your view of God, go with that, worship him as such and present a gospel message consistent with your view of God. And I think that is exactly what we are all doing. I support you in it.

Roy (8:42 PM)

Since God has already forgiven all of mankind's sin, what is the need for repentance? We know sin does not separate us from the love of God!

Ric (8:44 PM)

Andy. I require nothing of people to be saved from God doing something bad to them, because he's not going to. He has no reason to do so. Jesus took away the penalty only sin. But I do tell them that faith is required to enter into fellowship with God. No one can have fellowship with a person they do not believe

exists. So, of course, faith is required. But it is not required as some kind of quid pro quo, to ward off God from doing something bad to them. It's a matter of what faith accomplishes, not whether or not it is required.

Perry (8:45 PM)

5 Reasons You Should Repent Again and Again: <https://ymi.today/2017/01/5-reasons-you-should-repent-again-and-again/>. This link is for Roy, specifically.

Ric (9:05 PM)

Repentance is good, but it depends on why. To restore fellowship with God (who has not gone anywhere ...we have)? Sure! Thousand times a day. I live and breathe this. But to repent so that God will choose to not do something horrible to us when we die? Well.... do this if you think you need to! The God I know took care of the sin problem, fully and finally, on the cross. The only left is to say thanks, turn TO God and away FROM sin (because you now can), and know He already reconciled you and will never forsake you. What a wonderful Good News message we have for the world to hear. They are hungry for a God who loves them and can be completely trusted ... not appeased!

Roy (9:06 PM)

Amen Ric!!!

Ric (9:06 PM)

Those seem like reasonable reasons, Perry! When is the last time any if you told someone that if they do not repent, they will go to hell or get annihilated (which ever you believe)? Be honest, or maybe just don't reply. I do not want to know when you last THOUGHT about doing this, or last time you thought how important doing this should be. When did you ACTUALLY give it straight to someone, and press on them the gravity of the situation? Have you ever actually done this? Perhaps. If so... when. How long ago? If you REALLY believe what you claim you believe (that God will do something horrible to them if they do not repent) you would warn everyone you see. Do you? If you did, did anyone respond with... "Yes, now THAT is a God I can trust"? Perry... on the pickle ball courts? Perhaps! Andy... in the coffee shops? Perhaps! Alan... on the side of a death bed person? Perhaps!

Roy (9:26 PM)

Most don't want to jeopardize their present relationships with the toxic "bad news" of main-line Christianity. No one would come over for the holidays.

Ric (9:27 PM)


True!

Perry (9:33 PM)

Did you read the 5 reasons to repent?

Ric (9:34 PM)

Right-on, Roy! Most Christians view EP (or Annihilation) like a “crazy uncle in the basement”, to be ashamed of and remain hidden. But not all do so. The folks from the super-fundamentalist Baptist church in town stand out on the street and wear a sign. They really do believe what they claim! I have asked many Christians this question. There is another Evangelical church in town that takes a hard and direct stand defending EP -- behind the scenes in a private meeting. But I have never, in 40 years, ever heard one sermon, or even one clear warning about the horrors of hell, spelled out in vivid detail so there can be no misunderstanding. Strange, no?

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You should see the other side of the sign.

Roy (9:37 PM)

I did read them, Perry, and will respond back. He basically did a good Bible study with no life changing testimony.

Ric (9:37 PM)

I read them and commented on them above.

Perry (9:37 PM)

It would be too difficult as a sermon for that church to preach. So instead, starting after Labor Day, the Associate Pastor is going to tackle the subject on Wednesday nights so people can ask questions as he goes along. In a sermon the congregation doesn't get to ask questions. In this less formal setting, people can ask questions as soon as they pop up.

Ric (9:41 PM)

That is great Perry. Glad to hear it. But still, my question is how can they not warn people, every Sunday, of such horror that awaits them if they do not repent? Just wait and hope they show up on Wednesday? It is hard for me to believe that they REALLY believe what they claim. But, I could be wrong. I know of two other Evangelical churches in town who have done sermons on EP. But even on this Wed eve meeting, I'm willing to bet that only one view will be presented favorably, and the others prejudicially. This is what all churches do. They do not exist to seek truth, but to defend an “already assumed true” doctrinal statement. And that is OK. We have freedom of religion here in America, and I am thankful for that. It is not education, but indoctrination. If you want education, you gotta do it yourself!

Rob (10:24 PM)

The only ones losing are the funda-gelicals. Maybe they aren't yet streaming out the doors of the churches, but something like 2.5 million per year are leaving the pews ... but they aren't leaving God. They will find the Ultimate Restoration folks, sooner or later. God is faithful to those seeking truth and reality in their lives.

Perry (10:24 PM)

They will simply teach from the Bible on Wed nights! I believe "Indoctrination" does a disservice to them.

Ric (10:36 PM)

Yes... indoctrination does a great dis service to them! That's why I point it out. I know some who teach there would be more objective and include all factual info ... if they could. But it does not work that way in any church. You, of all people, know this, Perry! I am not saying it is wrong for them to indoctrinate, just that they do it. It is who they are and what they must do to survive. All the facts will not be presented on Wed eve's, and you know it. It will be a one-sided view of Bible verses, based on the doctrinal statement that rules the church. You know this too. Why don't you go and ask good questions, respectfully? You know what to ask after spending the past six years talking with me. You are a very special guy at your church. Maybe you have an opportunity that you do not realize ... one that would be honoring to God and would serve the body there well. Take up Paul's exhortation, and gently help them learn to "examine everything carefully". You are the only person I know of there that could do this!

----- Wednesday, Jul 28, 2021 -----

Rob (6:42 AM)

Don't do it, Perry! Ha!

Ric (7:02 AM)

No worry, Rob. I do not think he will ... even though he is a Jesuit (who are known for asking good questions). This is why Perry made me an "honorary Jesuit", some years ago! It was a kind gesture, and I was honored by it. But I honestly do not know of another man at that church who could take on this task of "examining everything carefully". I tried and failed there many years ago. I'm now out for a blood draw and coffee... in that order. Saw Perry's pastor, sitting outside in the downtown area. He was doing sermon prep. We talked a while. He is a long- time and valued friend. I have known him since he was in high school at that same church, some 40 years ago. We talked mostly about the challenge of "pastoring", why he is in it, and I am not. Ha! I reminded him that I told him, many years ago, that he brought a needed "steady hand on the wheel" to that church when he came (after a lot of turmoil there). Man, he is nearing 60! Where does the time go? Any anger he once held toward me seems to be completely gone. Time has a way of healing people ... and bringing perspective. We both gained some as we have aged. That's what God does in us, thankfully. Onward and upward... always!

Rob (8:38 AM)

At 81, 60 is not even in my rear-view mirror, nor even in my exhaust fumes!

Ric (8:39 AM)

You have the energy of a 50 year-old, bro!

Rob (8:39 AM)

Ha! It's sometimes a problem just by being alive! I think my energy decided to inhabit someone else, or it's locked up inside my body that's in rebellion!

Ric (9:01 AM)

Right behind you, Rob. I doubt I will ever reach 80. So, I better get on finishing my books. But I keep getting distracted by all these darn texts! Ha! I plan to get my "Four Views of Eternal Destiny", and my "Restoration Quotes From Early Church Fathers" (summary of Ramelli's book) on kindle soon! I will start right after we resolve all these discussions! Ha! Hey... our texts over the past few weeks may become a book. I will call it... "Unconditionalism". Seriously!

Rob (9:02 AM)

You have coined a new view!

Ric (9:03 AM)

Perry, your church is not a problem for themselves, or for me! So, I see no problem. They are doing as good as job as can be done at a traditional church. Ok by me.

Rob (9:06 AM)

Oh, but they do have a problem. They are locked into Western Theology inherited from the Latin fathers! Lunch? Don't forget you are teaching tonight for me on Zoom, Ric!

Ric (9:16 AM)

Not really a problem for them, Rob! And not a problem for me ... for them to do what they do! So, the only real problem is ... your problem about them! You are wasting that precious energy that is slipping away, Rob!

Rob (9:20 AM)

Hah! I only think about them when you bring the subject up!

Ric (9:48 AM)

That is good. But, you bring them up sometimes as an example. And that is ok too. Lunch, yes. Where? But I have to sit at a different table, since I am "distancing" myself from you! Ha! I have had no takers, yet, on saying when the last time was that any of you warned someone about God doing something bad to them after they die, if they do not repent! I ask people this a lot. I seldom get an answer. Maybe you guys are different? Seems like the most important thing you could ever tell anyone. Right?

Rob (9:57 AM)

You name lunch ... around 12?

Ric (9:57 AM)

Fish.

Rob (9:57 AM)

Ok. Fish at noon. I couldn't answer that question several years ago. I would have had to dig down inside and not like what I found. Either I really didn't believe in hell, or I really didn't give a damn about anyone else.

Ric (10:02 AM)

Bingo, Rob! Hey Perry... the fish place is walking distance from your house. It's also walking distance from Roy's office. Join us, if you want, guys.

Ric (10:05 AM)

Andy... if you start now, and speed, you can come here by noon. Ha! Yes, Rob, that was one of my realizations. I did not REALLY believe God was a monstrous being. I just believed it because I was told it from an early age, and for so long. Once I got all the facts (which were withheld from me), EP became clearly false. I felt foolish for ever believing such horror about God. But I felt relieved, too, and my trust in God went through the roof, as a result! Why wouldn't it? Alan? Ya gotta eat, bro. And its free! Rob, I'm going at 11am, but I will stay until noon when you come. But then I will have leave, because of that "distancing" thing I'm doing. Ha!

Alan (10:20 AM)

I can't today, unfortunately. I'd love too, though.

Ric (10:22 AM)

Another day, then Alan. You are always welcome.

Andy (10:59 AM)

Have a fish and chip for me! And, while you're eating them, ponder that those poor fish will be no more, just like the continuously unrepentant ones will be someday! Let's hope and pray, though, that everyone does repent and turn in full faith and obedience to our Lord Jesus!

Ric (1:06 PM)

Perry, you are now a full member at your church, baptized (sorry I was not allowed to do it, but it was an honor that you asked me), you are a deacon, and your wife is on staff. Your church is a good one, and I recommend it to others. In fact, I just did so the other day to someone wanting a church for their granddaughter to attend. So, go serve there and hold to their doctrinal statement confidently. It is a good one. As you know, I have questions about it, but that does not matter.

Rob (1:07 PM)

So, what evangelicals want is a God who only loves up to a point, who gets even with bad people, who demands to be loved, and gets even by doing worse things to his enemies than they ever did to him or anyone else! Yep, that's a great God!

Perry (1:35 PM)

You preach universal restoration, Ric. That is contrary to my church's teaching statements and doctrine .


Ric (2:03 PM)

I do not "preach" anything. Have not for about 10 years. But I do have loving discussion with friends! I am not against anything at your church, or their doctrinal statement. They express in it what they honestly believe. Cannot beat that! And I support them in doing so. I just see EP as the least likely view of the three available. All three views are humanly legitimate, and none can be proven as the correct one. I affirm you and them in that choice. And you may very well be right! I have beliefs that are my opinions. I do not hold them dogmatically and admit I CAN be wrong. I'm not against anything or anyone. Only FOR some things, as preferences. I wrote a booklet, that you reviewed, where I present all four views as legitimate, and one as my preference. You know this.

Rob (4:18 PM)

Ric is probably dogmatic about one thing, no, maybe two -- he loves his wife and God! Everything else, ... he's like a flea on a hot griddle! I am dogmatic about some things and open about others. We are both the same in this regard: We can definitely be pains in the behind! (Made that wording a little gentler for you who might be a little religious)

Rob (4:46 PM)

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Alan (4:59 PM)

Totally agree with the hard sell part!

Rob (5:03 PM)

I'm a former Nazarene.

Alan (5:04 PM)

I was licensed as a Southern Baptist at one point in time in my life.

Ric (5:04 PM)

I like that cartoon. He has said a mouthful!

Rob (5:06 PM)

SBC? Oh, Alan! Not sure you can be forgiven such a sin! Ha!

Ric (5:06 PM)

People change. Sometimes it takes a long time. Look at me! Ha! The American Baptist Church has redeemed him! Ha! Personally, I have found ABC to be a breath of fresh air from the SBC. Hey SBC may be splitting up soon. God does great things in church splits, even though He does not cause them!

Alan (5:33 PM)

Laughed at "Oh, Alan! Not sure you can be forgiven that!!!"

Rob (7:37 PM)

Thumbs up!

----- Thursday, Jul 29, 2021 -----

Ric (8:07 AM)

Guys... I want to thank you all for contributing over the past few weeks, and for doing so in genuine love. None of us "pull our punches", but no "death blows" either. Iron sharpens iron, for sure. I have been greatly served by all your discussions. This was all unintentionally started by me, just sharing a couple of books I thought some of my friends (you all) might appreciate. As I recall they were on reliability of the Bible (staring Ehrman and Wallace, as opposites). It took off from there. We have beat many subjects to death ... and then some. Gotta admit that we have left no stones unturned. You will never get to do this kind of thing at any church. Seeking truth is not their purpose ... defending an already assumed truth is! But that is ok. Like-minded people have the right to get together and control local information, in this country. It is called "freedom of religion". Freedom of speech is what we do, here, and we can do so outside of churches in the public square. What a country we live in! At this point I want to give everyone some options. You are officially released from duty! But you can "re-up", if you wish. I suggest that any one of you can start a new subject (or just take a break), and anyone is free to request opting-out. In that case, we will create a new group with just those interested. Again, thanks to you young guys for putting up with us old codgers, who are stuck in our ways. (Well, you young guys are kinda stuck too. Ha!). We learn from you and love you. We look forward to you going on, way past us, in the years ahead bringing an even more accurate rendition of the Good News of God's grace to a hurting world!

Rob (8:10 AM)

You can run but you can't hide, Ric!

Ric (8:14 AM)

"You can check out anytime you like... but you can never leave!" (Hotel California).

Rob (9:38 AM)

You know how to drive an 81 year old guy nuts. Oh, I'm already there!

Andy (12:28 PM)

As Ric indicated, this horse has been beat to death so no need to respond, but I find Luke's statement about Judas going to "his own place" in Acts 1:25 curious. Many will say that Judas went to hell (the restorationist will say that he'll be rehabilitated from it, the conditionalist will say that he'll be annihilated or destroyed in it, and the EP folks will say that he'll be forever punished in it). However, Luke doesn't mention "hell" (gehenna), but even if he had he meant hell, he would have been more accurate to say "their own place" since hell would be a place for all unbelievers. Anyway, I just find Luke's wording about Judas' goings, particularly his not going to a said "hell," to be interesting. Alright, that's it for now. God's blessings and hope you all keep cool up there!

Rob (12:32 PM)

You're up there (north). We're down here (south) ... in hell! Ha!

Andy (12:34 PM)

The high here today is looking to be 108, and down there only 96. Both hot!

Rob (12:35 PM)

Smoky, up there?

Andy (12:36 PM)

Yeah, but I can see some blue too. Smoky there?

Rob (12:37 PM)

Yep? No blue!

Ric (12:45 PM)

Keep reading the Myths book, Andy. Your opinion is valued. Who else in this town would even read this book? Thanks.

Andy (12:55 PM)

There's got to be some brothers up there that would read/discuss the Myths book. Heck, Daniel Wallace wrote the Forward. I'll be up there Sunday night but I may be leaving Monday evening. If I stay longer, we can try to get together before I head back. You're asking the wrong question Ric... the "condition" is not about receiving something bad but about receiving something great. That's what Jesus and I emphasize... believe for eternal life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life." (John 6:47). Feel free to include that in your booklet.

Ric (2:01 PM)

I will. And I agree. That is the correct answer! It's about good and positive things God will do, not about negative and destructive. But my question is still a good one to ask people who hold to some form of conditionalism that results in God doing horrible things to people! I will keep asking others. Your answer is a great booklet conclusion! Your call on getting together. You're the busy one.

Ric (12:45 PM)

Thanks for all your input. Everything we chatted about will make it into my book titled "Unconditionalism". But no real names will be used. I think we all covered every aspect of the most important subject and the theme of the Bible ... The Redemption of Mankind! See you all next week, perhaps. Last call for anyone wanting to say how long it has been since you clearly warned anyone of God's "condition" (belief) required to prevent Him from doing something horrible to them after they die. If no takers on this, I will just report (at the end of my book) that no one wanted to say how long (so that this question is not just left hanging). Thanks, guys. Take care. Ps: Now I gotta go figure out how to retrieve all these texts we wrote! Ha!

Epilog

After an exhausting eight weeks of
texting, and a break...

<Epilog text goes here>

Conclusion

<conclusion goes here>

About the Author

Carl Jones is a retired Sr. Technical Writer living in Grass Valley, California. Prior to this he was a Hardware/Software Engineer for thirty years, He has been married 45 years to the only true love of his life. He has two adult children and one beautiful grand-daughter, all of whom he loves more than life itself.

Carl earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering (1979) at California State University in Sacramento, California. He earned a California Community College Life Teaching Credential in 1984 and has taught technology classes at two California colleges. He also graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary with a Certificate of Graduate Studies in 2010. Carl has studied in the Masters of History program at American Public University in W. Virginia.

Carl is an Army veteran and served in Viet Nam in 1970. He has lived in Sacramento, CA; Eatontown NJ; Grand Rapids, MI; Dallas, TX; Beaverton, OR; and Nevada City, CA. He has made two trips to China (Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Shanghai and Beijing); one trip to Bangkok, Thailand; and one trip to England (Loughborough and London).

Carl also plays music publicly, and in about a dozen assisted living centers in Grass Valley.