

Lesson 13: Open Forum – Part 1

I. What is the origin of the races? Can the three races be traced to the three sons of Noah?

A. Let's begin by looking at some facts from the Bible about human races.

1. God created man in his own image.(Genesis 1:26)
2. There was a first man, and that first man was Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:45)
3. God has made of one blood all nations of man. (Acts 17:26)
4. All humans come from Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:20)
5. There are no racial distinctions in the Lord's church. (Colossian 3:11)
6. Those who obey the Great Commission may make only one classification of the people they encounter: saved or not saved. And those are the same two categories into which all men will one day be placed by God.

B. What are the three races?

1. The question speaks of tracing the three races back to the three sons of Noah (Ham, Shem, and Japheth), and generally speaking there are three major races of man.
 - a) The three races are Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid.
 - b) Some sources identify a fourth: Australoid or the Australian Aborigines, but that group may also be identified as a sub-group of the Caucasoids.
 - c) Because race classification is so difficult, other classification systems have been proposed, some with as many as two or three dozen races.
2. Biologists determine species by including in a species all individuals that are capable of breeding to produce fertile offspring.
 - a) There is, of course, only one species of man – Homo Sapiens.
 - b) This fact tells us right from the start that whatever differences there may be among the various human races, those differences are minor.
 - (1) The DNA of any two people in the world typically differs by just 0.2%. Only about 6% of that 0.2% can be linked to racial differences.

c) In fact, the differences within the various human races are just as pronounced as the differences among the groups.

3. People often think of skin color when they think of human races, and yet within each of the three human races there is a very wide variety of skin colors ranging from light to dark – and that wide variety did not require millions of years of evolution.

a) There is no such thing as a “black race” or a “white race.”

b) In humans, skin color is controlled by two pairs of genes (Aa and Bb), one pair dominant (A, B) and one recessive (a, b).

c) If Adam and Eve had both been “AABB” then they could have produced only children with the darkest skin color possible, and if they had both been “aabb” then all of their children would have had the lightest skin color possible – and yet we know that neither of those situations could have led to the wide variety we see today.

d) If instead Adam and Eve had both been “AaBb” (called “heterozygous”) (two dominant and two recessive genes), they would have been middle-brown in color and from them – in only one generation – skin color differences could have occurred easily from the lightest possible to the darkest possible and combinations in between.

e) If these children then began to marry only those of similar color (as is often the case), the various “racial” tribes could have begun to form very shortly after the original heterozygous couple began to reproduce.

f) Thus, evolution and great periods of time are not required to explain skin color, and the same is true for other racial differences as well.

C. Do the three races correspond to Ham, Shem, and Japheth?

1. Let's start with what we know.

a) All human life descended from Adam and Eve.

(1) We are all related to each other without regard to whatever minor racial differences may have developed in the intervening years.

b) Prior to the flood it is likely that a wide variety of racial differences had already had time to develop. Many could have developed within just a few generations of Adam and Eve.

c) Those of us living after the flood can trace our history back to the three sons of Noah and their wives (who themselves were most likely not related directly or at least closely to Noah).

d) Genesis 10:32 tells us that from these three family groups “were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.”

2. The common belief is that the descendants of Shem remained in the Middle East (including, for example, both Jews and Arabs), the descendants of Ham migrated to Africa and parts of Asia, and the descendants of Japheth migrated into Europe and other parts of Asia.

a) This view influences our language even today. The term Semitic for Jewish people points back to Shem and his descendants.

3. So what is the answer to the question? The short answer is we don't know for sure but it is very unlikely that the three sons of Noah correspond to the three major races we see today.

a) Instead, those races likely emerged at some point after the flood as people grouped together and genetic differences among the groups became more pronounced.

b) Further, there was very likely much intermarriage among the three family groups prior to the time of their separation.

c) In fact, Genesis 11 tells us that they initially moved about together in one group rather than moving apart as God had commanded.

d) Further, the three sons of Noah were genetically similar, and so the differences among the three groups of descendants would have come primarily from the three wives – and that fact is interesting from a scientific point of view.

(1) Mitochondrial Eve is the name given by researchers to the woman who is the matrilineal most recent common ancestor for all living humans.

(2) Passed down from mothers to offspring for thousands of years, her mitochondrial DNA is now found in all living humans.

(3) Mitochondrial Eve is the female counterpart of Y-chromosomal Adam, the patrilineal most recent common ancestor, although they lived at different times.

(4) She is believed by scientists to have lived about 140,000 years ago in what is now Ethiopia, Kenya or Tanzania. The time she

lived is calculated based on the molecular clock technique of correlating elapsed time with observed genetic drift.

(5) In human genetics, Y-chromosomal Adam is the patrilineal human most recent common ancestor from whom all Y chromosomes in living men are descended.

(6) By analyzing DNA from people in all regions of the world, geneticist Spencer Wells has concluded that all humans alive today are descended from a single man who lived in Africa around 60,000 years ago.

(7) Without commenting on how long ago scientists believe they lived and the accuracy or inaccuracy of those estimates, isn't it interesting that scientists now tell us that the common female ancestor lived long before the common male ancestor – just as the Bible has been telling us for 1000's of years.

D. An incident we must not overlook in answering this question is the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

1. The Bible tells us that the descendants of Noah did not disperse as commanded but rather stayed together and attempted to build a tower reaching up to Heaven.

2. God not only dispersed them – but he changed them! His stated intent was to make them different from each other.

a) Genesis 11:7-8 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

b) We know God changed their speech – perhaps he also changed their appearance. We are not told.

3. This incident also helps us explain an interesting phenomenon: giant pyramidal structures are found all over the world, supposedly built by people who never had any contact with each other.

a) We associate pyramids with ancient Egypt. But pyramids are not uniquely Egyptian.

b) Pyramids and pyramid-like structures can be found all over the globe, built by cultures that span vast distances of geography and time.

c) They appear in the ancient African kingdom of Kush, along the Nile ... in Mesopotamia and Sumeria ... in England and Ireland ... in India and throughout Southeast Asia ... in ancient China ... in Peru's coastal and

Andean regions ... in the ancient Olmec and Mayan realms of southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador ... in pre-Columbian Illinois... and elsewhere.

d) How can it be that a form as distinctive as the pyramid was built in such widely separated locales? Was it merely coincidence? Or was there another force at work?

e) Scientists tells us it is coincidence. But I think those dispersed by God at Babel kept up their building programs all over the world! Genesis 11:8 tells us that the people quit working on that city, but it does not tell us they did not work on other cities and towers after they were scattered.

II. What does the Bible say about tattoos?

A. To begin, let me note that these comments are directed less to those who already have a tattoo than to those who are thinking about getting one.

1. A 2006 a study done by the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology found that 24% of Americans between 18 and 50 are tattooed; that's almost one in four. And the survey showed that about 36% of Americans age 18 to 29 have at least one tattoo!

B. While the practice of tattooing can be traced to the earliest history of man, the English word “tattoo” is of recent origin.

1. The word “tattoo” comes from Polynesian languages and was first used in English by Capt. James Cook in 1769.

2. Sailors introduced (or more likely re-introduced) the custom into Europe at that time, which explains why even today tattoos are commonly associated with sailors.

C. The practice of marking the body goes back much further, and is specifically condemned in the Old Testament.

1. Leviticus 19:28 “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.”

2. The point of the verse and the surrounding verses is that God’s people were not to be like the people around them in the world, and specifically were not to follow any of their pagan religious practices.

a) All agree that tattooing traces its history to pagan religious ceremonies and the occult.

b) Even today, tattoo parlors are often linked with astrology, incense, and magic.

3. While marking the body is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament, the same injunction to be different from the world appears throughout the New Testament and is, for example, the theme of the Sermon on the Mount.

D. A Christian must hold his own body in the highest regard because it is no longer his own body but rather belongs to another.

1. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

E. Some suggest that Jesus himself had a tattoo, and they point to Revelation 19:16.

1. Revelation 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

2. There are many things wrong with that idea.

a) First, the verse itself says that the name was written on his vesture and on his thigh – the most likely explanation being that the text was on his vesture and the vesture was on his thigh.

b) Second, Revelation is a book of figures and symbols – a book in which Jesus is also shown, for example, as a lamb.

c) Third, to say that Jesus had a tattoo is to say that he violated the Law of Moses, which we know he did not do.

d) Fourth, if we are going to turn to Revelation to find out what God has to say about tattoos, a more instructive passage might be 13:16-18.

(1) Revelation 13:16-18 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

3. One thing you sometimes hear is that people with tattoos are rebels just like Jesus was a rebel.

a) If we leave here this morning with nothing else, please leave here with this – Jesus Christ was not a rebel!

b) Luke 2:51 tells us that he was subject unto his parents.

c) Philippians 2:8 tells us that he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

d) Jesus came to this world not to be a rebel but rather because we were rebels and he wanted us to be otherwise.

F. Tattoos send the wrong message to the world.

1. The Latin word for tattoo is stigma, which tells us much about how tattoos were viewed at least at that time.

2. Throughout history, tattoos have been used to identify criminals with a mark of reproach and disgrace.

a) Today in many prisons over 80% of the prisoners have a tattoo, and over 50% get more tattoos while in prison.

3. One author has described them as marks of indecency, depravity, perversion, and rebellion.

4. And yet we often hear that all that has changed in our modern world – that today a tattoo is a mark of high-fashion. Really? Let's look at some statistics.

a) Dr. Timothy Roberts is a pediatrician who himself has a tattoo. He believed that people with tattoos were unfairly stereotyped and so he set out to remedy the situation. What he found surprised him.

b) Young people between 11 and 21 with tattoos are:

(1) Four times more likely to engage in sexual intercourse.

(2) Over two times more likely to drink alcohol.

(3) Nearly two times more likely to use drugs.

(4) Over two times more likely to be violent.

(5) Over two times more likely to drop out of school.

c) His conclusion was that permanent tattoos have strong associations with high-risk behaviors in adolescents, and the presence of a tattoo during an examination should prompt an in-depth assessment for high-risk behaviors.

5. Oh, but while that may be true for young people, we adults can handle it. Our tattoos are just fashion statements.

a) And yet what are those “fashion statements” saying to our children? And what road are we putting them on when we directly or indirectly encourage them to get tattooed?

6. Is a tattoo going to help me spread the gospel or hurt me in that endeavor? What kind of reflection will a tattoo have to the world? We should ask those questions before we have our body – or rather the Lord’s body – tattooed.

III. Were sins rolled forward in the Old Testament? Does God remember forgiven sins?

A. Let’s start with the second question first: When the Bible says that God will remember our sins no more, does that mean that he literally forgets the sin?

1. The answer must be no.

a) If we remember our own past sins and if God knows our thoughts, then how can he not know something that we know?

b) Also, the Bible records many sins that we know were forgiven – sins by Moses, Abraham, and David, for example. How can God not know something that is recorded in the Bible?

2. Another reason the answer must be no is that a Christian can fall from grace, and when that occurs those formerly forgiven sins are no longer forgiven.

a) Matthew 18:32-34 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

3. What then does it mean when God does not remember our sins?

a) I think the phrase is an idiom meaning that God no longer holds those sins to our charge. He does not remember them against us – but he does remember that they occurred.

B. The other question has to do with the common notion that sins in the Old Testament were rolled forward rather than forgiven.

1. Some verses appear to indicate that sins were forgiven prior to Jesus’ death on the cross.

a) Leviticus 4:31 And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall

burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour unto the LORD; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

b) Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

c) Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

2. Other verses appear to indicate there could be no forgiveness prior to Jesus' death on the cross.

a) Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

b) Hebrews 10:3-4 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

(1) Verse 3 is where we get the concept of sins being rolled forward – there is a remembrance made every year.

3. What is the solution?

a) The solution is not difficult. Forgiveness before the cross looks forward to the cross just as forgiveness after the cross looks back to the cross. Everything looks to and depends on the cross whether it is before or after that event.

b) Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

c) Hebrews 9:15-17 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

d) Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my

law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Lesson 13: Open Forum – Part 2

I. First, thanks for the kind words about the lessons in this series. When I suggested this study as a potential class I thought it would be both interesting and helpful, but I never dreamed of the reception that it has received. Your kind comments have been most appreciated, especially in light of the work that has gone into each lesson. Some, of course, require more than others, but each of them has necessitated many hours of preparation. Eric and I realize the number of hours represented by the class members, and we never want to come in to teach a class for which we have not made adequate preparation. In fact, as you have noticed, our preparation exceeds the time that we have for each session (I am a worse offender than Eric in that regard and I refer to the extra time and not to the extent of preparation). Some, I understand, do not care for an all lecture class, but given that preparation takes so much time, and given that the time for presentation is so precious, and given that so many comments in an “open” class (for lack of a better expression) have a great tendency to get the class off course from the subject at hand with much point and counterpoint, lecture seems to be the best procedure. My preference would be to take all of the time necessary to cover a book of the Bible verse by verse. I took over a year to teach the book of Job in that manner, but given the time I asked and received questions in the class, always trying to keep the class on subject by directing the discussion. Absent that discussion generally results in more discussion than learning (at least a learning possibility). For that reason we are even more grateful than we can say for the fine reception that this class has received and we look forward to the next quarter. But to the remaining questions.

QUESTIONS

II. I have a question based on something said in the lesson on the role of women. The comment was made that Eric "preaches" through thywordistruth.com and probably reaches more people than most preachers do through their pulpit. If this is true, can a woman run a website similar to "Thy Word Is Truth" that is intended for a general audience? For that matter, can a woman write a book on religious issues for a general audience? Are Christian women restricted to writing for women?

A. First, the setting in which the woman is forbidden must be remembered.

1. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 establishes that the woman is not to preach or lead in the worship assembly of the church in the presence of men.
2. Some suggest that this is not an absolute prohibition, but one that can be waived in a man or group of men grant permission to the woman to preach or take the lead, assuming that in that instance the woman has not usurped authority over the man.

3. Clearly, however, man cannot give woman permission to do that which God has prohibited her doing.
4. The word “teach” means “didactic discourse” and one cannot preach or teach without delivering a didactic (intended to teach; morally instructive) discourse.
5. However, the word for “silent” in 1 Timothy ((be quiet or peaceful and submissive) is not that used in 1 Cor. 14 (be silent, hold your peace). 1 Timothy refers to a broader context in which the woman is to be characterized by a quiet, peaceful submission. It does not require that she refrain from speaking. 1 Cor. 14 refers to the worship assembly and requires silence in leadership.

B. Second, recall that a woman is not prohibited from all teaching.

1. Priscilla joined with her husband, Aquilla, in teaching Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:26).

2. Lenski writes of Luke’s language describing this situation: “Aquila and Priscilla must have been surprised when they heard him. But they at once noted serious limitations. When Luke writes that they ‘took him to them’ (indirect middle voice), we must note all that is involved. Moreover, Luke now places Priscilla’s name before her husband’s. [The KJV reverses the names, but see the ASV and most other translation.] In v. 18 the reason for this placement is only grammatical; here it means much more just as it does twice in Paul’s letters (Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19, where Paul even uses Prisca instead of the diminutive Priscilla). We conclude that Priscilla was the moving spirit, that she was by nature more gifted and able than her husband, also spiritually fully developed due to having had Paul in her home for eighteen months while residing in Corinth. Aquila seems to have been a gentle, quiet soul, who was genuine in this unobtrusive way. It seems that the couple was childless.”

“The beauty of Priscilla’s character lies in the fact that she never thrust herself forward, never asserted herself, or made her superiority felt. She was loyally true to Paul’s teaching that the husband is the head of the wife. Aquila had found a pearl among women. Priscilla is the direct opposite of Sapphira (Acts 5). The one stimulated her husband to all that was good, the other helped her husband on to his destruction. Priscilla is the example our women need so much today when so many thrust themselves beyond their proper sphere and often do not know where to stop.”

3. Additionally, the woman may teach other women (Titus 2:3-4), and she may teach mixed groups such as Bible classes where she neither teaches a man or lord’s it over a man.

C. The question now is into which of these categories, if either, does teaching over the internet or writing a book fall?

1. It is clearly not the church assembled.
2. It is clearly not what we call “a worship service,” whether large or small.
3. Because it does not fall into any of the prohibited categories there is no scriptural prohibition to prevent a Christian woman from writing books or teaching on the internet for general consumption.
4. Moreover, the man who thinks that he has nothing to learn from a Godly woman or wife is robbing himself of a rich source of education.

III. Can a woman baptize?

A. Baptizing a person is the result of teaching; it is not teaching. Neither is it a learning situation calling for quiet submissiveness. In the worship service it would be a leadership role and should be done by a man, but all baptisms are not in a worship service.

1. If a woman’s baptizing a candidate violates any scriptural injunction, it would be that the female is not to exercise a leading role in the worship.
2. Even if it were otherwise all right, it is best to keep in mind that some things that are lawful are not expedient. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23.
3. Obviously if there is no man present a woman not only can but should.
4. Personally, I have never seen a situation where such was necessary, but I can envision its happening.
 - a) While living in Lubbock, my wife taught a class for women at the jail; many of the students were baptized.
 - b) Had I or others not been available she absolutely should have performed the baptism.
5. The New Testament does not prescribe qualifications for who does the baptizing as it does for the one being baptized.
 - a) Questions concerning who can baptize are not new in the church.
 - b) Tertullian (ca. 155-230) wrote: “It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church; but neither (is it permitted her) to teach, nor

to baptize, nor to offer, nor to claim to herself a post in any manly function, not to say (in any) sacerdotal office.”

c) Since Tertullian, similar problems have arisen again and again.

(1) Sometimes they are important enough, or are aggravated to such extents, to threaten the peace of the church.

(2) What is needed in these cases, as always, is a patient seeking for truth along the lines of the principles that are clearly revealed.

B. Where we need to be careful is in looking for some hypothetical situation with which we are “comfortable” and then applying it to a situation where “comfort” is not the standard.

1. This has been done with the introduction of musical instruments into young people’s gatherings, which, when the comfort is complete, is followed by introducing it into the worship service.
2. First Colony has recently taken that step.
3. Some argue against the necessity of baptism based on the hypothetical of a person’s being killed on the way to the baptistery, concluding that if he is excused we are all excused.
 - a) They never stop to ask by what authority he or they are excused.
 - b) They never stop to ask if they really want to be excused on that basis, i.e., an untimely death.
4. Some want to be saved like the thief on the cross, they assume without baptism (but see the lesson from last week), but when you start preparing the cross they change their minds.
 - a) When they say that that is not what they meant, that they just wanted to avoid baptism for the remission of sins, they admit that the hypothetical doesn’t apply to them.
 - b) That leaves them in knowing intentional rebellion against the will and commands of God.
 - c) They cannot be saved at the hour of untimely death by crying out, “But Lord, I was going to be baptized next Sunday.”

IV. How does “free will” balance with prayer for one’s salvation?

A. This question has perturbed Christians over the years.

1. Man is a free moral agent created by God with the ability to choose between Him and evil.

a) Joshua stated it well – “¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.” Joshua 24:15.

b) Joshua was but echoing what he had learned from Moses: “¹⁴ But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. ¹⁵ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; ¹⁶ in that I command thee this day to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, that thou mayest live and multiply, and that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. ¹⁷ But if thy heart turn away, and thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; ¹⁸ I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish; ye shall not prolong your days in the land, whither thou passest over the Jordan to go in to possess it. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; ²⁰ to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.” Deuteronomy 30:14-20.

2. Given that man is a free moral agent who may reject God (though at man’s peril) and God will not override that choice, is it appropriate to pray that a man may be saved who has chosen to reject the way of God; is this not a prayer for God to do that which he has said that he will not do?

B. Two passages have been used in discussing this question.

1. 1 John 5:16-17: “¹⁶ If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

a) Of this passage *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament* says: “After the grand assurance that prayer is always heard, never

unanswered, the Apostle specifies one kind of prayer, *viz.* Intercession, in the particular case of a “brother,” *i.e.*, a fellow-believer, who has sinned. Prayer will avail for his restoration, with one reservation – that his sin be ‘not unto death’. The reference is to those who had been led astray by the heresy, moral and intellectual, which had invaded the churches of Asia Minor They had closed their ears to the voice of Conscience and their eyes to the light of the Truth, and they were exposed to the operation of that law of Degeneration which obtains in the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual domains. *E.g.*, a bodily faculty, if neglected, atrophies. . . . So in the moral domain disregard of truth destroys veracity. Acts make habits, habits character. So also in the intellectual domain. *Cf.* Darwin to Sir J. D. Hooker, June 17, 1868: ‘I am glad you were at the *Messiah*, it is the one thing that I should like to hear again, but I daresay I should find my soul too dried up to appreciate it as in old days; and then I should feel very flat, for it is a horrid bore to feel as I constantly do, that I am a withered leaf for every subject except Science’. And so in the spiritual domain. There are two ways of killing the soul: (1) The numbing and hardening practice of disregarding spiritual appeals and stifling spiritual impulses. . . . (2) A decisive apostasy, a deliberate rejection. This was the case of those heretics. They had abjured Christ and followed Antichrist. This is what Jesus calls [blasphemy against the Holy Spirit] (Matt. xii. 31-32 = Mark iii. 28-30). It inflicts a mortal wound on the man’s spiritual nature. He can never be forgiven because he can never repent. He is ‘in the grip of an eternal sin. . . .*Cf.* Heb. vi. 4-6. This is ‘sin unto death’. Observe how tenderly St. John speaks: There is a fearful possibility of a man putting himself beyond the hope of restoration; but we can never tell when he has crossed the boundary. If we were sure that it was a case of ‘sin unto death,’ then we should forbear praying; but since we can never be sure, we should always keep on praying. So long as a man is capable of repentance, he has not sinned unto death.”

(1) Some, such as brother Guy Woods, state that this passage prohibits one who has committed a sin that is unto death. TEGNT, quoted above, may take the same position, but avoids the conclusion on the basis that it is beyond our ability to know when one has sinned to that extent and that therefore we should keep praying for one that may have reached that state.

(2) However, it seems to me that this position goes beyond what John is saying; he does not say that we should not pray for such a one, he says that he does not say that we should.

(3) He requires us to pray for the one that has not sinned unto death; he does not say that we should pray for the one who has.

(4) There is a difference between “should not” and “may not”.

(5) This seems to say that, while there is no obligation to pray for such, there is no prohibition against it.

b) Romans 10:1-3: “Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.”

(1) In this passage Paul is engaged in prayer (supplication) to God for Israel that they might be saved.

(2) While it is true that they had a zeal for God, it is also true that they had rejected the Messiah to the point of crucifixion.

(3) If ever a person or group of people were beyond “reachability” by God’s grace, it would seem to be the Sadducees and Pharisees of Paul’s day.

(4) Still, Paul had hope because he himself had been a Pharisee, a Hebrew of Hebrews. Phil. 3:5.

(5) Paul prayed for the apparently unreachable.

C. But what good does it do to pray for them when God cannot answer that prayer without violating their free will?

1. First, it is hard to sincerely and honestly pray for someone without personally reaching out to them.

2. Second, God may use providential means beyond our knowledge to bring them into a position where they will have opportunity and motive to obey the gospel if they choose to do so.

3. Third, God has already used one means – the Great Commission – to carry the gospel to them.

D. Finally, I leave you with one other passage: “And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34.

V. What is the Christian view of war? [This is an issue on which an entire quarter could be spent. Entire books have been written about it. The answer given here is a quick summary and a partial answer. While directed toward war, the principles also apply to peace officers.]

A. There are at least three basic attitudes toward war.

1. Pacifist – it is wrong ever to take human life whatever the reason or provocation; therefore, war is always wrong.

a) This was the position of many early Restoration Movement preachers.

b) Moses Laird wrote: “To illustrate what I mean: it is held to be doubtful whether a Christian man can go to war according to the New Testament. For myself I am candid to think he can not. But others, let me allow, with equal candor, think differently. Suppose now, we as a people, were equally divided on the point. Neither party could certainly force the other to accept its view. The difference should be held as a difference of opinion, and hence should be made a matter of forbearance. But should either party attempt to compel the other to accept its view, and in case of failure should separate, I should not hesitate to regard the separating party as a faction, and hence as condemned by the New Testament.”

c) David Lipscomb carried the position to the point that he thought it was wrong for a Christian to participate in civil government in any respect, even to vote.

d) Batsell Barrett Baxter stated in class that he would not kill a man who entered his house and was attacking and killing his wife.

2. Activist – as expressed by Commodore Stephen Decatur, Jr (5 January 1779 – 22 March 1820), an American naval officer notable for his heroism in the Barbary Wars and in the War of 1812. He was the youngest man to reach the rank of captain in the history of the U.S. Navy, and the first American celebrated as a national military hero who had not played a role in the American Revolution. “In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but right or wrong, our country!” Thus war is always right.

3. Selectivist – War is sometimes both just and justly fought.

B. Some basic principles.

1. The Christian is not to take personal vengeance. Rom. 12:19-21.
2. God's vengeance is not limited to the after-life. Rom. 13:1-7.
3. The question is not "What would Jesus do," but "What would Jesus have us do?"

C. What would Jesus have us do?

1. Soldiers are mentioned in the New Testament in the context of duties; none is commanded to go AWOL or cease serving when his enlistment is up.

a) Luke 3:14 ⁴ And soldiers also asked him [John the Baptizer], saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse *any one* wrongfully; and be content with your wages.

b) Acts 10:1-2 ¹Now *there was* a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, ² a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. [Note that Scripture does not add "but he was a soldier" as it added "but he was a leper" in the case of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1).]

2. If we love our enemies, how can a Christian shoot them?

a) When an enemy has surrendered he can't; when an enemy is defenseless he can't.

(1) In fact one can probably envision many instances in which it would be inappropriate to kill an enemy while functioning as a soldier.

(2) In fact, this has often been the difference between countries that follow ethical warfare and those that do not.

(3) For instance, after the carnage in Spain, Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed told Lisbon's *Publica* magazine that a group of Islamists were "ready to launch a big operation" on British soil. "We don't make a distinction between civilians and non-civilians, innocents and non-innocents, only between Muslims and unbelievers. And the life of an unbeliever has no value." The cleric added that he expected to see the banner of Islam flying in Downing Street. "I believe one day that is going to happen. Because

this is my country, I like living here. If they believe in democracy, who are they afraid of? Let Omar Bakri benefit from democracy.”

(4) Right now the enemies of the United States are being provided special food consistent with their religious beliefs, adequate shelter, and medical treatment superior to that which they would receive in their own countries.

(5) This sounds a great deal like returning good for evil. Rom. 12:21; 1 Thess. 5:15.

b) Some questions may help clarify this question.

(1) Did God cease loving mankind when He destroyed all but eight souls in the flood?

(2) Does the fact that many will spend eternity in Hell mean that God does not love every human being even to the point of sending his Son to die for them?

(3) If God can love his enemies and still punish them, why can't we?

c) We are commanded to love our enemies, but we are also commanded to love the innocent citizens who many be enslaved or murdered by an attacking army?

(1) Is our obligation to them not to provide justice, to defend their God-given rights?

(2) Doesn't it make sense that our duty to protect the innocent must prevail?

d) A just war may be conducted both in the name of justice and of love; refusing to restrain an evildoer, or when necessary to take his life, when justice and love demand it, is a distortion of New Testament Christianity.

3. God has made clear that He desires to restrain evil among His creatures.

a) He has authorized the use of deadly force when necessary, which is one of the primary functions of earthly government. Rom. 13:1-7.

b) Those who righteously attend to such matters are even called ministers for good.

c) You may argue that this refers just to government and not to Christians, but is that realistic?

(1) Can a Christian under the right circumstances be such a “minister for good?”

(2) Recently the nation was outraged by a thief who stole from an elderly lady on a walker her livelihood, striking her in the face and knocking her down.

(3) Would a Christian observing this not have an obligation to help using whatever force was necessary, or should he hurry to the other side of the road while yelling, “Some of you folks who are lost anyway hurry up and help. I am a Christian and I am forbidden to lend assistance.

4. But isn't that returning evil for evil?

a) It is never evil to do that which is right.

b) 1 John 3:7 – *My* little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous:

c) Proverbs 13:24 – He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

d) Revelation 3:19 – ¹⁹ As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

e) When civil servants and soldiers put their lives on the line to serve their fellow citizens and protect them from evil, they are involved in self-sacrificing love which is the highest form of love. John 15:13.

5. Shouldn't we turn the other cheek? Matt. 5:39?

a) Jesus' language here is addressed to personal ethics and not invoking the *lex talionis* (Latin for "law of retaliation"), commonly referred to as “an eye for an eye.”

b) If this principle is one to be applied across-the-board to individuals and governments then Paul certainly got it wrong in Romans 13:1-7.

c) It is morally wrong not to prevent a murder if you can do so, and, failing to prevent it, it is morally wrong not to punish the evildoer.

d) Likewise, it is morally wrong for a God-ordained government not to defend its citizens against a foreign aggressor that would do them evil.

e) This being the case, the Christian should be willing to uphold the government's righteous hand as it does justice (cf. 1 Peter 2:14; Titus 3:1; Rom. 13:1-7).

D. Do we then conclude that every qualified Christian may serve in the military?

1. Yes, but not necessarily in the same capacity.
2. Not every Christian is qualified to serve as a police officer or a soldier, but those who are not so qualified should not belittle or condemn those who are and do.
3. Some who are otherwise qualified cannot serve in a context that would expose them to the possibility of having to take life because such would violate their conscience (Rom. 14:23), and that would be a sin within itself.
4. In the United States that belief is accommodated through conscientious objection; one who so objects can serve in other capacities such as the medical corp with the ability to treat all, enemies as well as fellow-countrymen.

E. Should a Christian then "kill for his government" any time that the government commands it?

1. Obviously not. A Christian in Iraq or in WWII Germany or Japan could not do so.
2. When the cause is just, however, and the means used are just, the Christian may be so engaged.
3. The Christian fights for justice just as God does who uses force to check evil and accomplish justice.

F. What problems would a Christian face in the military?

1. More important than the physical dangers are the moral perils that confront the military.
2. Gambling, drinking, whoremongering, and other vices are often overlooked if not directly or indirectly encouraged.
3. The Christian who enrolls in the military will have more opportunities to stray from the straight and narrow than his civilian cohort.

4. Moreover, the Christian will at times – sometimes long periods of time – be unable to assemble with the saints on the Lord’s Day.
5. It is not impossible to be in the military without compromising some convictions, but it certainly makes it more difficult.

G. Conclusion.

1. It is in the Christian that we find the best possibility of finding one who can do battle to the nth degree and be meek to the nth degree in a just war fought by just means and in a just manner.
2. We should honor and pray God’s richest blessings upon those chivalrous soldiers as they seek to faithfully fulfill both aspects of this “double demand,” best found in those who have, by God’s infinite grace, cultivated the wisdom of serpents and the harmlessness of doves. Matthew 10:16.