
The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 17
Questions & Answers 1
June 13, 2023

Teacher: Matthew Halsted

Episode Summary:

In this episode, it's all about Q&A. Matt is accompanied by a very special guest as he offers answers to a range of questions, such as: Is evolution compatible with the Bible? Can the "Divine Withdrawal" view of God's wrath capture the full scope of what it means for God to bring judgment? Can Christians lose their salvation? and Would the existence of aliens undermine the truth of the Bible? A lot of ground is covered, so buckle up!

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey everybody! Welcome back to another episode of the Bible Unmuted. Thanks so much for joining. I'm super excited about this episode because we have a special guest, for the first time ever on the show, allow me to introduce to you the one and the only, Mrs. Tosha Halsted.

MH: How's it going?

TH: Hi Hubby.

MH: How are you?

TH: I am well...How are you?

MH: Good, good, good. So glad that you are on the show. This is a lot of fun. I'm excited we talked a lot about this...about you being on the show and the day has arrived. I'm excited. (TH laughs and says "me too!"). So just introduce yourself – what do you do for a job, and what is your calling, what is your ministry...and do you even like podcasts?

TH: I do! I love podcasts. Sometimes it's an excuse to on a walk by myself...Because we have four kids so that is predominantly my main calling. To raise them, to know how much they are loved by God and by us, and to follow Him and show the world what Jesus is like. So that's my main calling. I also am a fifth grade teacher at a private Christian school.

MH: Yeah! And the school loves you. When I'm up there everyone just talks about how great you are. And I think you're great (chuckles – and TH laughs), your students think you're great...

TH: Thank you....Well, I hope you think I'm great (laughs). I think you're great...oh my gosh....

MH: We should get married or something....(both laugh)

TH: Ahhh – let's do it. (both laugh)

MH: And it really is quite a...tell the audience, it really is a lot of fun to do this podcast and this is special because Tash and I have been talking a lot about doing a Q&A's and having her on and fielding the questions, and reading the questions, and just having a fun dialog and conversations. So yeah, here we are. And we have some questions. Some that Tasha and I have been thinking about and we thought would be important to address. And we have a couple from listeners. And thank you, by the way, if you sent in questions, thank you for your patience. Some of these questions are old and so we are just now getting to them. The plan is to do Q&As pretty often as part of the regular rotation of things. So I think we have some fun questions here today. So Tash, what do we got?

2:40 TH: The first one is on a topic that gets asked a lot. It has to do with whether or not the bible is compatible with evolution. I know a lot of Christians are very skeptical and even scared sometimes when they read things or hear that the earth is millions of years old, or things like that. So, that's the first question that has to do with evolution. Is evolution a viable option for how God created the world? Is it compatible with the bible, and so on and so forth?

MH: That is a very important question. A question a lot of people ask. A lot of people are raised or taught certain things about Genesis and the creation story – or creation *stories*, there. The question of evolution gets brought up a lot and I think me and you growing up in our...we both grew up in conservative evangelical backgrounds. We've talked a lot about how when we were younger to even entertain the idea of evolution would've been tantamount to heresy.

TH: Oh yea, absolutely.

MH: Did it ever get brought up in your youth group? Because I know you were much more righteous than I – I never went to youth group. (Both laugh) But you went to youth group and you were very involved in the church at a young age. Was this a question that got brought up a lot?

TH: You know...I think it probably had to have at some point. But I don't know. What stands out more to me is that I was taught by science teachers who were Christians, and they would always teach it faithfully because with the bible had to, but it always with this caveat, "I don't believe this. This isn't true. This isn't how God created the world, but I'm required to teach it, so..." And then they would teach it, but we always came to it from the stand of this isn't true, but we just have to know the facts of what other people are saying so we're familiar with it. Does that make sense?

MH: Yeah

TH: So I don't think that it was so much what I got in church as it was people who are actually teaching science who were Christians and who were also in that camp of feeling like it was contradictory to the bible.

MH: Gotcha. So, you were in public school and some of your teachers were evangelical Christians and said, "Hey. I don't quite believe in this, but it's in the text book so I'm going to teach you evolution, but I don't believe it."

TH: Right

MH I think that's pretty common, especially growing up in a place where we did here in Oklahoma, a very conservative state. I suspect that a lot of places are like that too. Well, let's just dive in. The question was: Is evolution a viable option. Let's just start off by saying this... It depends on what you mean by evolution. If you mean naturalistic evolution – like the evolution that doesn't require God *at all*...Because there is two varieties of evolution – the naturalistic version where just nature is all there is. And there is no supernatural realm. There is no God. There is no divinity at all. If that is what we mean by evolution, then no it's not a viable option because we believe in God

6:10 TH Right. It's not even in the equation.

MH: Exactly. And so that's not a viable option. Now what many Christians have done is...and even conservative Christians have done this – they've said, 'No, evolution is a viable option, but its theistic evolution.' So God uses evolution to attain what he wants. So, yeah. And a lot of people, and a lot of conservatively theological people have argued this way. And I think that's the first thing to say here. You mentioned earlier that a lot of people get scared by this stuff. A lot of conservative evangelicals get scared by this topic. And so I just want to be sensitive to that. If there is anybody in the audience who is listening to this, hopefully you're not freaking out thinking, 'What? Matt's talking about evolution?' (Both chuckle). Let me give some thoughts. I'd like to offer a reasonable case why I do think evolution is a viable option and specifically I'm more interested in the question of: Is the Bible compatible with evolution? Or maybe the other way, is evolution compatible with the Bible. And first I'd like to say just the obvious here, Christians do disagree about this topic a lot. So, I know a lot of Bible believing Christians who believe in theistic evolution. That God uses it as a creative process or something. And we also know Bible believing Christians who reject that idea. So maybe like young earth creationist who believe in a literal 6 day creation story, 24 hours each day kind of thing. We are very familiar with that. And I think it's important to say and acknowledge that in both camps there are Jesus loving people. Right?

TH Right.

MH And so we want to be respectful. This isn't an in-house debate. It's sort of like Thanksgiving dinner. As soon as you bring up politics you're going to have a million different views. But we all are in the same family. So I think that we just want to make sure that we are being charitable to our brothers and sisters who differ from us. Second thing I want to say is, I am not a scientist. I really wish I were a scientist. Because I love science. I am fascinated by it, but that is not what my training is in. And so, I am an amateur even if you could call me that. I am just not trained in science and so just a word of advice for everybody...you should never ask a biblical scholar about biology. (Both laugh). Ask me about the Bible, not biology. If you want know about biology, ask a biologist. So I'm not going to weigh into the science of all this. And quite frankly, when I've seen people who are not trained in biology, or astronomy, or geology...when I've seen people who are not trained in those things, weigh in on those things, it's never been really that good. It's just not that convincing. I definitely believe there are experts who know this stuff really well. And I am definitely not an expert in that, so I just want to give that caveat. I'm not an expert in geology or anything like that. I think I probably know more about the cartoon Bluey than I do biology. (Both laugh).

TH Bluey is good though...

MH We could have an episode about Bluey any day. I love that show. Many thanks to my Australian friends down there for giving us Bluey. (Both chuckle)

TH Oh Australian friends. It's like a walk down Memory Lane. It's wonderful. (Both agree and laugh) ...I think you make a good point though how we should be charitable to those who believe differently. Because no matter where you end up on this topic, I think a lot of people are surprised that they know and respect people in the other camp. I know a lot of...let's take for instance C.S. Lewis. He's one of the

heroes of the Christian faith and his works are widely read, but he was an evolutionist. So I don't think that we would throw out everything he has to say just because that's where he lands on how he believes God brought about creation. (MH agrees). And I think that if we look at how God uses other circumstance to bring about creation – like take human development for instance. God uses very physical, natural processes to bring about creation and in that way. And that makes perfect sense to us. But we would still look at a new born baby and say that it's a miracle of God. (MH agrees) That it was completely an act of God to do that. I think just to bring it back around – the main point is to say that we don't have to be scared when things are mentioned that are millions of years old. It's not negating the gospel (MH agrees). It's not negating or taking away glory from God in the fact that he did create.

MH Exactly. And I think that's a really good point. It's not. And I think there is a level of hermeneutical humility here, and we can say that none of were there. (Both chuckle and TH agrees). So all we have is the data and we are going to look at the data differently based upon our fears. And we're going to interpret data based on our fears. And were going to interpret data based on our pre-judgements our assumptions, our traditions and our denomination systems. And anytime you put those into question, I get it – look, it can be scary. So I want to treat this very cautiously and pastorally even. I think that's important, too. I mentioned hermeneutic humility. I think it's important just to say that, because none has a God's eye point of view, because none of us are God. And as believers we need to know our place. Sometimes when it comes to these deep topics, we need to realize that we are just blind people in a dark room crawling on the floor trying figure out where the doors are. And we are trying to figure out things. So, patience is a virtue in this sort of conversation.

12:48 MH Let's just parse out that question for a little bit if that's okay. Take a deep dive on this. Is the Bible compatible with an evolutionary theory? Or how did you put it, is it a viable option for a Bible believing Christian. And let me just say that when we are asking that question whether the Bible is compatible with evolution, that's a different question than to ask, 'does the Bible teach evolution?' Those are different questions. Because it can be compatible but the Bible doesn't necessarily teach it, right? And it's also not the question, 'is evolution true?' That's a different question all together. So again, I'm not going to answer, 'is evolution true?' And I'm not going to answer...well, I kind of am in a moment.... 'Does the Bible teach evolution?' And I'll get to that, too. I'm more interested in, is it compatible with the Bible?

Those are slightly different questions. And it's sort of life asking about the existence of aliens, right? Would the existence of aliens be compatible with the Bible? And I think that's a different question than, 'does the Bible teach that there are aliens?' And that's a different question than asking, "do aliens in fact exist?" Those are all different questions. So, if evolution were to be true, would I need to surrender my view that the Bible is true? So, if evolution were true, then the question for those of us who believe in the Bible would definitely want to ask that question...'are they compatible?' I think there are several ways to approach that question.

I think we should approach that question by asking the following question. What would we need to say about the way humans were created? And about the number of people God created in Genesis? What would we need to say about those things in order for the Genesis story to be compatible with modern evolutionary theory? So, basically modern evolutionary theory rejects the idea that humans came on the scene apart from a process of growth. So in other words, according to evolution, people are the product of millions of years of evolution, evolving natural selection, or whatever. And so, modern evolution would reject the idea that humans just burst on the scene suddenly, magically or miraculously. That's just not what they teach. Modern evolutionary theory would also reject the idea that human beings emerged from just one pair of first parent. They reject the idea that all humans come from two people. That's just not in the cards for an evolutionist. So if we want to say that evolution is compatible with the creation stories, then we would need to also say that the creation story allows for a process of time for humans to come on the scene. We would also need to say that there were more humans than just Adam and Eve. And so

the million dollar question is, does the Bible give us room for thinking in that way? That there were more humans on the scene and that creation of humans took a while or a process of sorts.

I was just thinking when I was prepping for this. I was thinking about Genesis chapter one and asking the question how di God create? What does the Bible tell us about God's creation of humans? Was it instantaneous creation? Was it a process? And if you read Genesis 1:24-25, it says,

“And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind. Cattle, and creeping things, and wild things of the earth of every kind. And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind...”, and so on.

So the way that God made the wild animals of the earth in that verse is by letting the earth bring forth living creatures. And I find that pretty interesting. I suppose it's reasonable to think that might suggest origins; that animals came from the ground. That's interesting and I think some people might think that is compatible with an evolutionary idea. It might also suggest a process, a time. And maybe that's compatible too. There is also in Genesis 2:4-7 the account of God's creation of humans. In Genesis 2:7 it says,

“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”

Very familiar with that text. And so you might get the same ideas here. I mean, somebody might say, 'see, humans come from the ground and this might suggest a process – origins that might be compatible with evolutionary theory.' I mean, you could look at those and think, maybe there is wiggle room here for evolution. So, the problem I see, though, with this is that it's hard to say that Genesis is talking about evolution there. I mean think about it. For starters, evolutionary theories didn't come about until a couple hundred years ago, give or take. Evolutionary theory – if we're talking about a Darwinian Evolution, this is something that Darwin is a recent character in the grand scheme of things. So I highly doubt Genesis was written from that perspective. As if they were trying to teach Darwinian Evolution.

18:15 The other thing here that I think is interesting, is that I don't think we want to look at Genesis 1 & 2 for science. I don't think we want to get our science from it. Because if you think Genesis 1 & 2 teaches science, then we're going to have to confess that it teaches really bad science. (Chuckles). So for example, if you look at Genesis 1:6-8, and I'm reading from the New Revised Standard Version because I think the NRSV gets it so good here. It captures the words very well. It says,

6 And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

So that word dome is **râqîya'** (רַקִּיעַ), and it's literally in the ancient mind, this hard surface of sorts that is in the sky and keeps the waters above from falling down and merging with the waters below. Ancient Jews held to an ancient view of the cosmos. And here we see that. For them it was this dome-like surface. This hard surface that kept the waters above from the waters below. And it was a dome-like sort of thing. A râqîya'. So my personal thought here that I would be cautious to anyone who thinks that Genesis teaches science. Or that Genesis is assuming a modern scientific standpoint of things. You just don't want to go there otherwise you are going to have to say that there is a hard dome in the sky. And that is a caution that I would caution young earth creationist on, I would caution old earth creationist on that too. Because many old earth creationist are like the young earth creationists. They try to look to the Bible to endorse their scientific world view...or I'm sorry, their personal view of science.

20:12 And evolutionists might be tempted to do that here with the verses that I looked at. My personal thought is that I think we need to do is look at these Genesis stories for what they are. They are semi-poetic stories about humans and the origins of heaven and earth. And they are semi-poetic. I'm not saying that they are all poetry. Because most Old Testament scholars are going to admit that this kind of reads like poetry but it's not actual poetry. But it's very poetic. And especially Genesis 1. And I think in these stories about humans...and by the way, I'm getting somewhere with this. I'm just giving a little background here. When we read Genesis 1 and 2 about the story of Adam and Eve for example, I think we need to read the story of Israel here. It's a story about how a people were graciously allowed by God to live in a good land, and a paradise. They never the less sin and then they are sent off as exiles from their home. I mean, as some scholars point out, this is the story of Israel. It's a story about Ezekiel chapter 37. It's in that chapter that we see the prophet pick up language from the creation story to describe how the nation of Israel will be restored from exile. There is the valley of dry bones but God will breathe into them his life and his spirit and resurrect them again. This is like Genesis chapter 2 when God breathes into man the breath of life. And Ezekiel is taking that story in a sense and he is using the language of it to talk about the resurrection of Israel. Some scholars point out in Genesis 2 and 3, that Jews would have read that thinking 'that sounds a lot like my story'. The Jewish story. N.T. Wright talks about this. Others talk about this too. A lot of scholars will use this view. So I think what we should do is use the Genesis creation stories as stories full of imagery and perhaps even metaphor. For example, if a young earth creationist were to point to Genesis 2 where it says 'the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life' – that one...If they say that is a literal reading, I would generally push back and say, 'You know, that might not be the case. Just because the Bible says that humans are made from the dust, doesn't mean that they were literally made from the dust.' I don't think that is necessarily what Genesis 2 is teaching. For example, if you look at Psalm 103:14 you read this:

For he knows how we are made. He knows that we are dust.

Now in that text the psalmist is not talking about Adam and Eve. He is talking about the Jewish people, he is talking about a group of people who live way past then. But he says that they are made from dust. Now he's is not meaning that literally. He uses very similar words and phrases, the same ones in fact from Genesis chapter 2. The idea of being made or formed and the idea that people are dust. So, I think this language in Genesis chapter 2 may just be metaphorical and not necessarily teach instantaneous creation that God makes man from the dust. I think the way to read this is...I think this is more about our mortality, our frailty, our finitude. I think that's probably what Genesis 2 is talking about there. It's very metaphorical. So, there's a million other things we could say about this verse, especially in terms of the time it possibly took God to create according to this text – the days of creation.... You know, the days of creation don't seem to be literal days. They seem to be *literary* days. And I talk a lot about this in a few article I wrote... I don't remember what the article are called, but you can find them on my website. Just rummage through the blog and you will find some stuff on Genesis. Because I think it's important here. If you interpret Genesis 1 & 2 very literally, you might have a contradiction on your hands. Because in Genesis 1 it says that the heavens and the earth were created over a span of six days, but in Genesis chapter 2 in verse 4 – the second half of verse 4 – it says that the heaven and earth were created in one day. And so, as scholars point out, you have two different creation stories. They are talking about the same thing, but they are using different ways of describing it. And if you want to say that the day is a literal 24 hour day, then you've got a contradiction on your hands because, how long did it take God to create everything? Six days or one day? Well, it depends on what verse you read.

TH Hmmm. What version of the story.

MH Exactly, exactly. I think....here is why all of this is important. Exegetically here, I don't think it's necessary to interpret these textoterrestrials literally. I think we need to interpret them *literarily*, as many writers have eloquently put it. And it's not necessary to think that God did this in a short amount of time.

In fact, I think it makes better sense to not take this literally. Because again, if you take this literally, then you get some contradictions here.

25:40 TH Well, and it opens up some more questions here. Because if we take it literally then there's a lot of questions. Because at what point did God create other people? When Cain went to settle in the land of Nod and he had Enoch, he didn't marry his sister. I don't think anybody would be comfortable saying that. Maybe, but I don't know.... But I think there's lots of questions that we just don't know. So I think that we have to be open to the possibilities. There's lots of details that are just mysterious. They are hidden. So we can't really make a lot of concrete assumptions when the details just aren't there. So, basically I don't think....

MH Well, I think people would say... like a young earth creationist, I know of many well-known who would say that the details are there. They would say, "See it says that God created Adam from the dust of the earth." And I would point out, 'Yes it is a detail, but is it a metaphorical detail, or is it a literal detail?' According to the psalm passage I read, he is saying that everyone is made from the dust. But that can't be literal – I mean *you* weren't made from the dust, literally. But you can describe even modern people metaphorically made from the dust in the sense that our life is short, we are mortal, we are finite, and we are frail. I think that's the point there. And there is no exegetical reason to suggest that it's a literal sort of thing in Genesis, especially when you look at these other extraterrestrials.

And you raise a good point about Cain. And it raises another interesting question about how many humans were there? And I think this is correct, according to modern evolutionary theory, the running idea goes that you would need a population of about 10,000, I think, of homosapiens (our ancestors) to get a viable thing going for humans to come on the scene. I think that's the magic number. I can't quite remember what evolutionists (inaudible) on that. But Genesis seems to teach that only two people were created initially, so we are about 9,998 short. So, how does this bode with evolutionary theory? How do we square with it?

TH It says that Cain builds a city. What was the city *for*? (laughs and MH agrees). There are just lots of questions there, lots of details there. We at least have to be open to different possibilities and not be scared of them. Because there are unanswered questions like that.

MH Yeah. there are.... I mean it's fascinating, really. There are places in the text that seem to assume a larger populations of humans there. Let's just think about it. If you read Genesis 1 pretty closely, it doesn't necessarily say that only two were created. It says that God created human kind, male and female, he created them. Now in Genesis 2, you do get two people. You get Adam and Eve and what ends up happening is that they read the Genesis 2 story into the Genesis 1 story and interpret 1 in light of 2, and so forth. And I just don't necessarily think that's a good idea, per say, because they are two different tellings; no doubt of the same story, but in two different ways.

But anyway. In Genesis 2 you do have Adam and Eve and I think this is pretty clear. But does this mean that they are the only ones? And I would say, '*maybe*, but not necessarily.' So the first thing you have to notice is that Adam was not always in the garden. At least not initially, that is. If you read Genesis 2 you see that he was formed and then it says that God planted a garden and then he put Adam there. So, the assumption is that Adam was formed first and then he was placed in the garden. We don't know how long that took. I'm curious because it says that God *planted* a garden and so with that word what all is implied in that. So he had some sort of existence outside of Eden. I'm not sure that's important, but maybe it is.

So if you fast forward to the stuff you were talking about, you have Adam and Eve, they were driven out of the garden, they were in exile, Cain kills Abel, God punishes Cain, and then Cain basically says to

God, "You have punished me more than I can bear, I'll be this wanderer and this fugitive on the earth. And anyone who comes across me will want to kill me".

TH Right

31:00 MH And the question is of course, who is he talking about there? Who is he worried about? John Walton, the great Old Testament scholar jokes about this verse. He says, "Who is he afraid of killing him? Mom and Dad?" (Both laugh and agree). And again to your point, this seems to assume that there are other people who want him dead, or who might want him dead. And you also brought up Cain building the city – who is that for? And of course that gets into interesting questions about Cain too, like where did his wife come from? And is that his sister, and, 'I just think that's gross'.... (TH laughs and agrees) It seems like maybe another assumption here might be that there are other people here. I'm not making this stuff up. I think it's important for people to know that very serious scholars –and I would say...well I don't want to put a number on it - very serious scholars have suggested that since the creation stories have this sort of metaphorical potency to them, it could be the case that there was a large population of homosapiens living at the time of Adam and Eve and God graciously chose, or we might say elected, a pair of humans to be the head or some sort of representative of them all. And whatever they chose to do would impact everyone.

So does this text allow for the view that the creation of humans over time? Does it allow for that? Does it allow for the view that there might have been more than two humans? Yes, it's possible. It seems so. And I don't think we're stretching the text here. If anything, I think this view could account for some subtle details of the text. Such as the assumption that there were other people around. It has some explanatory power. And I don't want to suggest that this is all there is to the question. This is Q & A...so there is more that I can say on this....(both agree).

TH There is just so much to consider. And I think back to the original question... is it a viable option, I think you've showed how it is. We don't have to be scared of it. But there is just a lot of things to be considered when you think about all of these things. So I think like you said, the point is to be charitable to people of opposing views and not be scared of that.

MH Right. We make so many assumptions about the Genesis story. We think for example, that we think that Adam and Eve were created immortal. That they just couldn't die. It's not quite true. They needed the tree of life to live. They needed to eat of it to live. And that's why when they sinned, God sent them away from the garden because he didn't want them to keep eating from it and live forever in their sinful state. It was the tree that kept them alive. And the idea is, as many biblical scholars would say, the idea for Adam and Eve is to take the life of Eden and spread it across the world for the benefit of the whole world. But of course they failed. That's just the point about the assumptions we make about this text about the supposed immortality of Adam and Eve. No - they were very dependent of the life that comes from that tree, according to the text. So, it is fascinating how we bring a lot of assumptions to the table that may not be biblical, *at all*. So again, a million plus one things we could say about this. This is just Q & A. I feel like we I've just potentially made everybody mad... (both laugh). So many will say, 'what about this, what about that...', and I totally get it. There are questions about original sin, death before the fall, and all that kind of thing. But we can maybe get to that later. I just want to toss these things out there to whet our appetites a little bit and think about the question a little bit. (TH agrees). Don't send me hate mail.

TH Laughs. Yeah... please don't send hate mail (laughs)

MH I only read the good things (laughs)

TH This is a definite launching point for future study. So that's good.

35:13 TH So the next question is we have comes from Jerry.

MH Hey Jerry! I like Jerry, he's great.

TH Hi Jerry! He says, "I'd love to hear you talk about the security of the believer in light of books such as James and Hebrews that warns so much against apostasy. You've got Calvinists on one side and the perseverance of the saints, and Arminian on the other side with their warning against losing your salvation. What does the New Testament really say about all of this?"

MH I'm glad he asked that. Because I alone have the answer to that question...(both laugh)

TH Oh my goodness.

MH Let me flip a coin here and see what.... No, really. That is such a great question and I'm glad you asked that because it's super important. So yes, you do have texts in the New Testament that talk about enduring to the end... the gospels talk a lot about that, Revelation talks a lot about that, you get this in Romans chapter 2 (which if folks have been following along on the podcast we talk about enduring to the end). So you definitely have this component. The question is can you lose your salvation... does he say that?

TH Yeah, he says that.

MH Can you lose your salvation? This is an interesting question. I don't think you can lose your salvation in the sense you can... someone said this and it's pretty funny. They said, "I don't think you can lose your salvation like you can lose your keys." That's not quite capturing it the way it works...like you have a lapse in memory, or you have, in the case of your relationship with God, you have a lapse in judgment because of sin... and then, oops, you've sinned, so now you've lost your salvation. I don't think that's how that works. I think God's grace is so much bigger than our frailty. And praise God for that. I don't think we understand how deep grace is. I just wouldn't say you could lose your salvation. If someone were to say that, I would say no, you can't lose it. Not like you can lose your keys.

Another questions here and I think what we're really getting at here, is can someone commit apostasy. And that's a word that Jerry used a moment ago. So what is apostasy? It is when you know the truth. You have been committed to the truth and you have been a follower of the truth and you have decided, fully knowing that what you are doing is wrong, you have decided to make a U-turn and reject the truth that you know is true.

TH Like abandonment

MH Yes. Abandonment. I think that's a good way to put it. So can someone actually commit apostasy? And I'm going to say, yeah, I think so. Hebrews warns against it. You can read Hebrews 6, Hebrews 10. I think what is being described, especially in Hebrews 6, is someone who has been enlightened by the faith and the Spirit and has participated in the goodness of God in a meaningful way – a meaningful participation. Maybe along the same lines as the passage in 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul talks about participation in the Eucharist. When you partake in the wine and the bread. You are participating on some mysterious level with the body of Christ. And you are partaking in the gifts of the Spirit with your brothers and sisters in Christ and you just say 'no' to that. You turn on it. Is that possible? I think the fact that the scripture warns us against it, assumes that it is actually possible. That's how I would put it.

So this opens a big can of worms because this is a big debate among Calvinists and Arminians. And among the things that these two camps debate, this is going to be one of them. A Calvinist would say that the people who committed "apostasy" were never really never Christians to begin with. They may

have been part of a church, they may have been participating in the Eucharist, they may have been good church members for decades, but at the end of the day they were not *true* Christians. Because otherwise they wouldn't have fallen away.

Now an Arminian would say, 'Well, of course they were true Christians at that point, they just said, 'no', and they fell away.' But it's interesting because no matter if you are an Arminian or a Calvinist, you are going to say that faithfulness to Jesus and that endurance is a requirement for a final salvation. And again, it isn't a requirement in a sense that you are earning it. Don't hear me say that. And if you are interested, you need to go back and listen to the episodes I did on Romans 2 because I talk about and repeat what Paul says about that there is this aspect of seeking God, pursuing him, being faithful to God, and being faithful to Jesus. That doesn't earn your salvation by no means, but you are doing those things because you have been gifted with such forgiveness that God now expects you to do that.

40:50 I had a conversation once with Matthew Thomas. He has written a great book on Paul. I guess I should upload that to the podcast so that people can have that here too. I've done a number of chats with him and in that conversation he talks about that in John Barton Clay's book, he says something like, "God's love is conditional but it's not unconditioned." I hope I'm not butchering that. But, the idea is that because you've freely been given forgiveness. Freely. No merit is in play. But because you have been freely given that forgiveness, you are now a steward to pass that on to others. Just like the story in the gospel, the parable of the unforgiving servant. He has been given forgiveness for a whole bunch of stuff, a big debt. And then his servant comes to him and says, "forgive me of this little bit" and he says, "No! Go to jail." And then the big master comes back and asks, "What are you doing? I have forgave you of all this and you're being a stick in the mud and you won't even forgive him for this little thing. Now you're going to jail." And I think that is that idea that because we have been given so much grace, we really need to steward that faithfully. That is not earning your salvation.

On the podcast I mentioned on one of the episodes I mentioned it's like marriage. If a spouse says to their spouse, say a wife says to their husband, "A condition of being married, I'm going to love you unconditionally, but a condition of making this marriage covenant work is that you're going to have to be faithful to me." That other spouse can't say, "You're a legalist because you are making me be faithful" Well, what about grace? It has nothing to do with legalism. This is just part of the covenant. I think our Christian faith probably works a little bit like that. In that sense it's not...praise God we are not saved by our merit. We have no merit. It's all pure grace. Unconditional mercy and grace and love. Again, like I said earlier, we don't understand the depth of God's grace I am convinced. But since we have been given the Holy Spirit, we have been given the tools, we have been given the grace to grow. And it's our responsibility to follow God in those graces that he has given us.

So, we've kind of come a long way here, but can a believer commit apostasy? I'm going to say yes. But I wouldn't phrase that in terms of losing your salvation as if how many sins does it take to lose your salvation... that is not the point. Apostasy is when you look at Jesus and say, "I know you're the Savior. I've even tasted of your *saving* grace and I'm out and done with you." And look, we know the mercy of our Lord, he would always take you back. He would take anybody back if they came back. But in those situations, you really harden your heart. I think he would take you back if you did that, for sure, because God is 100% forgiving. But the choices that we make, form our character and what not. So, I think those passages in Hebrews are there for a reason. But there is so much more I could say, because I think Calvinists would come back and say, "If you fall away, you were never saved to begin with." And they would point to passages like John 6, passages there but...

TH Or, 1John 2 – *They went out from us, they did not belong to us, if they belonged to us, they would have remained with us....*

MH Yes, that's a good one too. Yes, and Calvinists really point to that one too. And that's a great text and it's a good reminder. That text there, and John 6:37 would be a good Calvinistic text. And I think my point here is no matter what position you take on this, and quite honestly, I don't think the Arminian or the Calvinist positions quite capture everything here... I think there is just a genuine mystery that language evades or that's evasive to our understanding of it. But, my point is, that no matter what position you take, at the end of the day, everybody, Calvinist, Arminian, they are going to say that perseverance of some sort is a requirement.

This is probably going to open another can of worms, but I think that the Arminian position probably has an upper hand on the question of assurance of God's saving love. But I really don't want to go into that. That's a whole other issue. By the way, it sounds like I am coming in favor of the Arminians here. I was more reared on the reformed tradition, the reformed side so I have great respect for that. In many ways I consider myself reformed. I am not a Calvinist though, in the modern sense. But there is much about reformed theology that I do love and cherish. But yes, that's a whole other question. Jerry, I hope that answers your question somewhat....It probably raises more questions....

46:22 TH So the next question is from Doug and it's edited just a bit for clarity. He says, "Dr. Halsted, I listened to your Romans podcast regarding the wrath of God, Romans 1:18-32. I agree with you regarding God's wrath being revealed. By God giving humanity up to their sinful desires. If I remember correctly, you stated that God reveals his wrath by removing his protection, his presence, and his grace, and lets an individual like Adam and Eve, or even humanity, such as the flood, which was an act of uncreation... The many examples you sited, are true in this regard, but is it the whole truth regarding God's righteous wrath? Isn't it also true that God's wrath includes his judgment and punishment for sinful rebellion? I think of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Ananias and Sapphira, the bowls of God's wrath. How about the prophet Habakkuk complaining to God regarding using the Chaldeans to discipline or punish Israel. Or the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Or the prophet Joel and his reference to the future Day of the Lord. Or even in Romans 3:23-25 where the apostle states that God has provided Jesus the Messiah as the propitiatory sacrifice by his blood. Doesn't the word propitiatory also have to do with appeasing his own wrath through the satisfactory sacrifice of Christ, for God has saved us from himself?"

MH Man, that's a great question. There is a lot there. It's a well-crafted question. In fact I was just talking to another listener today and we were talking about this idea of wrath. His name is Kenny and we were talking about this very question. So let me see if I can parse this out. And really my answer here assumes that discussion in Romans 1. So if you are just now tuning into this, you need to go back and listen to or at least look through the transcripts of Romans 1 and it will make sense of what I am saying here. If I can repackage the question here and put it in a couple of sentences. It seems like what Doug is asking is, that he largely agrees with the idea that God's wrath is about his divine withdrawal; that God just gives humanity up to their sinful desires and that's the way God reveals his wrath. He largely agrees with that. However he is asking if that is the full story. He's asking if isn't it also true that God is doing something. That is isn't just him withdrawing his presence and letting evil run amok. He is actually inserting his presence perhaps, or inserting his hand of divine judgment and actively bringing about divine judgement upon people. And Doug referred to Sodom and Gomorrah, the bowls of God's wrath (from Revelation), and Ananias and Sapphira. And I would say, here is what we need to do. All of those instances...those counter examples, like Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.... I think those are great examples, but I don't think they negate the idea that God's wrath is about divine withdrawal. And the reason I say that is because, it was another listener who was asking this question this last week. And the way I answered his question is the way I will answer this one. I would say that we don't need to confuse...there are two ways of looking at this. The mechanics of God's wrath and the concept of God's wrath. The concept of God's wrath is divine withdrawal. God withdraws his divine presence and grace. And once he does, evil runs amok and that is the judgement. The mechanics of it might look as if things are happening, as if God is actually doing something. But the mechanics of it is actually just surface level. It's not what is actually happening behind the scenes.

So let me just break this down and give you an example. He mentioned the bowls of God's wrath. If you look at Revelation, there is three cycles of wrath there: the seals, trumpets and bowls. And really what you have there in those cycles of wrath is creation undoing itself. Those cycles of wrath are in response to what humans are doing. And because humans are in rebellion to God, creation is in upheaval. So God is withdrawing his protective hand and letting the sun scorch the earth for example. You see that in Revelation. Originally the sun, stars and moon were intended to be, according to Genesis, a good service to the earth. To be a blessing to the earth. But here in Revelation they are destroying the earth. And that is just an example of the undoing of creation. God is withdrawing his protective hand and now you have cosmic upheaval and it's impacting the earth. That is very consistent with the idea of divine withdrawal even though there is active things happening. I think the same perhaps Sodom and Gomorrah – I think there is a kind of cosmic upheaval there because of the rebellion, God withdraws his protective hand and its part of creation, it seems like, that destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. So it's creational upheaval. You get to Ananias and Sapphira, and really there you just don't have a lot of data. It just doesn't tell us what happened. It just says they dropped dead. We don't know how. So I don't really think that is evidence against the divine withdrawal view. For all we know God just removed his protective grace and that's why they dropped dead.

52:25 TH So, the same could be said of the Passover, right?

MH Yeah. I've talked about the Passover. So yes, that's right...well, not here, but I think I mentioned it in that episode. Yeah, yeah. There you have the destroying angel. Called the destroyer. But the destroyer is also mentioned in Revelation, too.

TH Right. Yeah, but it says that the hand of the Lord will pass over and do this, but it's not really him actively doing this. It's him removing his hand of grace, basically.

MH Yeah. That's exactly right. I envision that there are very sinister spiritual beings who are like rabid dogs who God has on a leash. But for grace, they wouldn't be on that leash. And when we say no to God, when we reject God's grace, we are rejecting the leash that holds them back. I get questions about this all the time too because I am doing research on religious experiences and meta-normal experiences that people have. And it's just a fact that if you dabble in the occult, you are opening doors. Not because God is being mean to you, it's because you are saying no to God and you're exploring things that God has said 'no' to. And when you reject God's grace, you are rejecting by definition the leash that holds back the chaos. And the same goes for the Babylonian captivity when the Babylonians come, the Assyrians come and do away with the people of God. Well look, all God is doing there is allowing evil people to do evil things. That is why Habakkuk is distraught that God is using an evil nation like Babylon to destroy God's people. But we know from the story and history that God promises Habakkuk that he will destroy the Babylonians for what they do too. All God is doing is just letting evil Babylon be evil. He is removing protection and letting them do their thing. He isn't going to let them get away with it...

TH So, when Doug says, "Isn't it also true that God's wrath includes his judgement and punishment for sinful rebellion." Basically the judgement and punishment are just him removing his grace. Is that fair to say?

MH I think so. I think it gives a conceptual framework for understanding the mechanics of wrath. Yes, exactly. I didn't come up with this idea myself – I get it from Greg Boyd's *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God* book - it's fascinating but I don't agree with everything in his book - but when it comes to divine withdrawal I think Greg is on point. And the way he understands things is Christologically, and so he thinks we should understand wrath Christologically. In other words, the way you understand how wrath works, is on the cross. And so how did the cross work? I think you see divine withdrawal too. Greg Boyd and Tom Wright and others have talked also about the Powers, the darkness, the dark forces. Paul talks

about the authorities, the powers, the rulers, etc. These are descriptions for describing very sinister beings. And when you read Jesus's death on the cross, you see that Satan is the one who is very active and at work. He enters Judas's heart, for example. You get this idea that the forces of darkness are coming around Jesus. N.T. Wright says, oh how does he say it? I think he says, "You get this idea that Jesus is being choked off by the forces of darkness." The darkness is just caving in as you progress through the gospel story. They are caving in and circling around him (Jesus). And Jesus says, "I could stop this with a call to the angels." And he doesn't. So the idea is that he is allowing evil to implode. And that captures the divine withdrawal idea. That the way Jesus has conquered, evil is not by force, but by withdrawal. By letting evil circle around him, all evil just circle around him, and implode in his own body. I think God knows the metaphysics of evil. Evil is a parasite of the good. It has no existence in itself. As Augustine said. Augustine talks about this. St. Gregory of Nyssa talks about this. That evil is a parasitic of the good. It's vacuous.

TH It's a distortion.

MH It's a distortion of the good. And if you leave it alone, detach it from its host. Detach it from its host of the good, it self-implodes. And I think God knows the way to destroy evil is to let it implode. But, it needs a place to implode. It needs a location. And that location is in the body of Jesus. That's why Romans 8:3 says that God condemned *sin* in the flesh of Jesus. God destroyed sin in the body of Christ. And so, Jesus is a bit like a sponge. He soaks it up. He doesn't spit it back, he doesn't shoot back, or kill. He soaks it up and it implodes. And that's why the powers of darkness didn't understand this. That's why you have these cryptic sayings in the gospels. The devils are confused. They ask. "Why are you here? Why have you come to torment us before our time?" They are kind of shocked that Jesus is even showing up. And had they known that by killing the Son of God, that they were signing their own death warrant, they wouldn't have ever done it. There was something about the crucifixion that destroyed them. And this takes us a little far field here, but I think it captures the ideas that basically its divine withdrawal. That's how the forces of darkness killed Jesus. Look, I could be wrong. I could be missing something here myself, but I think this idea of divine withdrawal really does capture the concept of wrath and it has ways of making sense of the mechanics of wrath, too.

58:53 TH Last question for today. So, you've written on the subject of extraterrestrial existence. If we ever discovered extraterrestrials, would that undermine the bible?

MH No! It would never undermine the bible. The objection goes, "Well, Matt – the bible doesn't talk about extraterrestrials and they can't accommodate the view of extraterrestrials because it doesn't talk about them." I think that's kind of a bad way of thinking about the topic because the bible doesn't talk about a lot of things. It doesn't talk about airplanes. It doesn't talk about every species of animal. And the way I look at it, is if we ever did find some other being on another planet – some sort of exo-planet (which I am highly skeptical that we'll do), but if we do, it would be no shock to me. It would be just like finding any other new species. It would raise a lot of questions...What is our roll in the universe? How do we understand our being image bearers of God in light of these other creatures? (Assuming they are intelligent). Are they fallen? Are they redeemable? Tons of questions, of course, would arise. But it has no bearing on any biblical truth of us being image bearers of God. It doesn't nullify the bible or anything of that sort. And just as a resource to folks, my friend Paul Thigpen, PhD from Emory University. He is a great guy, a Catholic theologian. He has a great book on this. It's called *Extraterrestrial Intelligence and the Catholic Faith*. It's really good for Protestants, I'm not Roman Catholic...he gets into questions about Christology, questions about sin, and all of those sorts of things. I need to have Paul on the show. He would be really great for this. So, no, it wouldn't do that. Yeah, we were talking about extraterrestrial people on another planet...which I'm kind of skeptical that we will ever find that. It would be cool if we did. It's just that the universe is so big, that I'm just not sure if by the time we noticed them they might be dead. They might be died out by the time we...you know. Anyway...

TH Wait... like we talked about earlier. About just the details that sometimes we don't have the privilege of knowing yet. That the bible... Like when we were talking about evolution. There are so many details... yeah, I think that its... yeah. Anyway.

MH And if people are interested in my view on this, I highly recommend listening to Preston Sprinkles podcast, it's called *Theology in the Raw*. I was on there a couple of months ago. It was mostly about UFOs, but we talked about ET and things like that. And I'm slightly skeptical of the ET hypothesis because the universe is just so big, if we were to see something, and we were to send a message to them, it would take so long for them to get the message. And by the time they got the message and sent us one back we might be.... who knows where we would be. And vice a versa. I'm skeptical. I'm open. I think it's a cool idea, personally. But no. The point here is hermeneutical. Would the bible be rendered untrue if we found an ET? "But the bible doesn't say anything about ET." Well, the bible doesn't have to. It's a message from God to humans for our calling. For our stewardship here on the earth. I highly recommend folks check out C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy. It's a fun three book series... C.S. Lewis is the man when it comes to so many things. And why not when it comes to ET?

TH Well, that was the last question we have for today.

MH Alright. Thanks guys. Thank you so much for joining. I hope this has been a blessing to you. Reach out anytime. Thank you so much. And if you like this podcast, go to your favorite podcast platform and give it a rating. A five star rating if you would be so kind to do that. It helps people find out about the show. It helps get the word out the show. I'm super thankful for that. Share with your friends. Reach out to me. You can contact me. Use the contact form on my website, matthewhalsted.com. There is a contact form at the top. I'm super thrilled when I get to hear from people. And if you feel led, consider becoming a patreon member. Patreon is a cool way to connect. There are all sorts of different levels of support. Everybody gets a free bonus episode every month. And depending on your level of support, you can participate in monthly zoom meetings with me where we talk about all sorts of fun different things. There are book giveaways for a different level. Anyway it's a lot of fun, so just want to toss that out there, if you so feel led. But all of you, if you would, please pray for the podcast. Pray that God uses it to bless people. Pray that God uses it a good tool for Christians who want to learn and study the bible. Thanks so much for listening. Appreciate you guys. And I look forward to next time when we are together once more.

1:04:59 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.