

What Is the Gospel?

A Theological Debate with Dr. Darrell Bock and Dr. Bob Wilkin.

This following is a transcription of a two tape audio set from the Grace Evangelical Society (www.faithalone.org). I'm not sure the exact date this event took place. My best recollection is some time around the mid to late 1990's. The debate took place at Dallas Theological Seminary. Comments below in brackets [] are the transcriber's comments.

Moderator:

What is the gospel? That question is so critical because it's so central to our lives and our ministry. We've chosen to call this a discussion rather than a debate to focus attention not so much on division, but there are going to be differences that are going to appear. And let me advance this question that you may keep in mind as the positions are presented: What is the appropriate relationship between God's work in justification and God's work in sanctification?

Our two participants in the discussion, Dr. Darrell Bock and Dr. Bob Wilkin, both bring a passion for evangelism and a scholarly knowledge for theological discussion. You certainly know Dr. Bock, but let me just take a bit to introduce some things that you perhaps didn't know. While in high school in Houston he attended Young Life. And it wasn't until after his first year in college that he became a Christian through Young Life. And then he and his wife both were involved in ministry with Young Life in the Austin area. Now I've told Dr. Bock many times that his greatest asset is his wife, who was the outstanding leader in Young Life in the Austin area.

But Dr. Bock is the research Professor of New Testament Studies, Professor of Spiritual Development and Culture at Dallas, a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, ThM from Dallas, and a PhD from Aberdeen, with post doctoral work at Tübingen.

Dr. Bob Wilkin is also a graduate of Dallas Seminary. He came to Dallas Seminary after four years working in Campus Crusade for Christ. While he was at Dallas Seminary, he was actively involved in ministry during his years here. He graduated with a ThM in '82 and a PhD in '85. During the years he got his PhD, he was pastor of a church that now is Crossroads Bible Church. He is presently president of the Grace Evangelical Society.

We're delighted and appreciate having these two men here. Darrell will speak first, and he will speak for nine minutes. Then Bob will speak, each answering the question. And then five minutes will follow in which they will question each other. And then following that initial presentation, hopefully managing our time, we will open it for questions from you [the audience]. So that's our plan, and I would like you to pray as we begin.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that we enjoy the benefits of the gospel that have come through Jesus Christ. Each of us confess our appreciation and great gratitude for the work that You have done in our lives. Lord, we desire to be faithful to your word as we minister in our society a new day. And we pray that You would help us as we examine this question, as we examine the important question of the gospel. Bless us as we work together now I pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Dr. Bock:

I think I was asked to discuss this topic because I'm known to hold to what I've sometimes jokingly referred to as "soft lordship" ... as if lordship can ever be soft. Let me define what I mean. I'm against any front-loading of the gospel with terms of "surrendering all" or any type of absolute qualifying language in the offer. Hard lordship, as I see it, uses such language. There's a real problem with absolute qualifying language. It is that one cannot know if the standard has ever been met. On this I suspect that Bob and I are in agreement.

Now that I've labeled myself, thus saving you the trouble [audience laughs], let's cut to the chase. So what do I think the gospel is, and what is the response that God requires and supplies in order to enter into its blessings? I want to make a few observations.

First, John never uses the term "gospel" or the verb to proclaim good news. I note this not to affirm that John fails to cover the topic. He does. He makes it clear that believing is what saves. It is an adequate term to describe a saving response. However, he never defines the gospel for us. He illustrates it, noting the offer of the Son and how we should respond in faith. One cannot carefully specify the contents of what one does not discuss.

Two, Paul does define "gospel" for us in Romans 1:1-17. My view of the definition of the gospel comes from the book of Romans. The gospel is the good news proclamation of the offer of God's power, through the Person and work of the Lord Christ, to give those who believe in Him forgiveness and relationship to Him, resulting in everlasting life. He must graciously give us this gift because we lack the ability to attain it ourselves because of sin. Justification is a wonderful gift because it not only means that I am declared righteous (Romans 4), but I am brought into a relationship that constitutes me as a child of God (Romans 5:1). Note it is through our Lord Jesus Christ that we have peace, and through the Lord we receive the reconciliation (Romans 5:11). Part of the gift the gospel offers then is Christ Himself, which Romans expresses in the image of being buried and raised with Him, expressed through the presence of His Spirit in my life (Romans 6-8). When Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation for all who are believing, it is what the gospel enables that makes it such good news. Paul does not think of the gospel merely as a ticket of escape from wrath. It is so wonderful because it is entry into a new, freshly enabled life. That life is not a condition of salvation; it is part of the gift that is the gospel.

By the way, John's Gospel agrees with this. The Spirit is an important part of the gospel offer, as He receives mention in John 3, 4, 7 and 14-16. The new life is important as well. That's why John calls it being "born from above." As John 3 shows, that gift has roots and teaching already given in the Old Testament. To seek forgiveness is to ask for clean relationship with God, which is why baptism pictures the moment of faith. With one comes the other. I can distinguish them, but I cannot divide them. Both are part of the gospel which comes to me by the gift of His grace. To want forgiveness but not relationship with God is not a response to the gospel. This is what I seek and receive by faith: forgiveness and entry into life that lasts into eternity. What kind of relationship is it when I believe? This brings me to my third point.

I am comfortable with the term "Lord" as a term of saving confession because it appears in contexts where the gospel offer and response is described in the New Testament. Romans 10:11-13 speaks of the one believing in Him not being ashamed. "Jesus," Paul says, "is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon Him." Now who is it that is called upon in faith? Verse 13 tells us, "All who call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved." I am glad I'm called upon to call upon the name of the LORD, for the title means that He has the authority and capability to distribute the deliverance for which I am appealing -- a good news deliverance Paul has just spent chapters describing. Paul says in these verses this is true for Jew and Greek without distinction. The title "Lord" in the gospel is not merely a way to say God. It is a title acknowledging God's authority over the salvation process. In the ancient world, to confess someone as the divine lord was to recognize his authority and rights. "The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." To call Him our Lord and to call upon the Lord who delivers says much about the nature of my relationship to Him as I come to Him for life.

Four, I'm also comfortable using the term "repentance" as another way to talk about a faith response. God's word treats it as an adequate summary term for our message, or at least our response to it. Jesus summarized His commission to those who would first proclaim the gospel by saying that they were to

preach in His name “repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). Repentance here is not a Greek concept but one from the Old Testament, given the remarks of Jesus that He is expounding the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures). Repentance, then, is more than changing your mind about Jesus. For to change your mind about who He is and what He had to do to gain my forgiveness on the cross, is to understand my need and the heinous nature and price of sin in a new way. Thus, the language of turning is also an adequate rendering for what this response of faith entails. Two examples must suffice.

Paul’s commission from Acts 26:19-20: I’m citing the New King James version [audience laughs], “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting of repentance.” The call to turn in this verse looks back to an earlier discussion of turning (the same Greek verb in verses 17 and 18). There the apostle outlines his commission to preach the gospel message: “I will deliver you from the people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from Satan to the living God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” To believe is to turn -- to God from Satan, to light from darkness. Repentance/Faith is a turning of direction to call upon God.

The second example is 1 Thessalonians 1:9, where the conversion of the Thessalonians is presented as, “how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-- Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.” Paul preaches the gospel – all of it – and it is to that gospel that the Thessalonians responded. Think with me for a second. These were Gentiles who used to plead with the gods and engage in idolatrous worship, appealing for their help, in recognition of their supposed authority with respect to their lives. Now they have turned to God through Christ for what they once sought elsewhere. The basic lines of my ongoing relationship to God are set in my initial faith response of turning to Him when I call upon Him who is Lord over salvation’s benefits.

So we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in God’s unique Son (John 3:16). I trust this Christ, calling upon Him as Lord, because He has authority, which I acknowledge in my calling out to Him, to forgive my sins, bring me into incorporated relationship with Him through His Spirit, and give me eternal life. He died that I might live. My faith response represents a change of direction -- a turning to Him because I now appreciate that sin costs and separates. I trust Him because I understand sin. I trust Him because I need Him. Thank God that He gives those coming to know Him the grace to appreciate this offer and cry out for it in faith. Thank God He seals the deal with His Spirit, providing enablement that I formerly lacked. Don’t sell God’s grace short. The gospel is rich in its benefits. [Audience applauds].

Dr. Wilkin:

As I travel around and speak about the gospel, I’ve found that there is a lot of confusion among the people in the pew. A lot of people, when they hear a clear presentation of the gospel, they turn to their friends and their loved ones and they say, “Man, I wish he could have been clearer on the gospel.” And the same people, when they hear what I call a garbled or confused gospel, they turn to their friends and they say, “Man, wasn’t that a great evangelistic message.” And the reason that I head the ministry Grace Evangelical Society, and the reason I’m here tonight is because I have a burden for the gospel of Jesus Christ. It’s transformed my life. It’s had an impact on my life. And knowing for sure that I have eternal life, that I am secure forever, has totally changed my life, the direction of my life, and what I am doing. And I’d like to share a bit of that burden with you tonight.

Now nine minutes isn’t much, so I’ve kept my remarks very brief. I’m going to basically be saying two things. First of all, what the gospel is. Secondly, what the gospel is not.

In terms of what the gospel is: John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Acts 16:30 and 31: “What must I do to be saved?” Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Romans 4:4 and 5: “Now to him who works, his wages are not reckoned as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Seminary, liked to quote these verses and many others, and he liked to say that there were 150 plus verses that say that the sole condition of eternal life is believing in Jesus Christ for it. And I want to say “amen” to that. The Reformers had the great cry in Latin *sola fide* – by faith alone. Now everyone talking about the gospel agrees that the death and the resurrection are essential for our salvation. He had to die to pay the price for our sins, to purchase redemption. But now, how do we get the gift of eternal life? What is the condition? In terms of the condition, the gospel is by faith alone. Stated simply, Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who simply believe in Him for it. Without any reference ... as you noticed the verses I mentioned ... no reference to turning from sins, no reference to commitment of life, no reference of promising to serve God, no reference to entering into a life-transforming relationship, no reference to persevering in faith and in godly practice ... simply believing in Him. The gospel is that simple: Jesus guarantees eternal life to all who simply believe in Him.

Now secondly what the gospel is not. And I’ve broken this down into four points:

First of all, the gospel is not faith plus works. Now a few years ago I debated a pastor in Baytown, Texas. And this pastor said that justification is by faith, but it is not by faith alone. He said it’s by faith plus baptism, plus confession of sins, plus obedience, plus turning from sins. And the whole package has to be involved in order to be saved and stay saved. That is the trust plus view of the gospel. That is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, trust that includes works is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are those who will say that justification is by faith alone. However, faith includes ... and then they will put in things like turning from sins, or being willing to turn from your sins, a change of life, being willing to enter into some sort of a life changing relationship. They might say it’s persevering in good works ... and on and on. I like to call this the kitchen sink approach to saving faith. You can put the whole kitchen sink in the enchilada and what you end up with is the same thing as view number one. In fact, Michael Horton criticizes John MacArthur for this very thing in his book, *Christ the Lord*. He says that’s what John MacArthur did in *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

The third view sounds a lot better, but actually it’s not. And this is the view: faith that results in works. There is a widely held view, and sometimes it’s cleverly stated like this, “We’re saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone.” Now that sounds good, but the problem with it is that it really involves something that I call Ed Sullivan faith. You know Ed Sullivan ... “We’ve gotta a really big show tonight.” Well Ed Sullivan faith is, “We’ve got really big faith.” And so what they say is, since faith includes perseverance in good works, you can’t be sure you got the really big faith until you persevere until the end of your life. Therefore you go through your whole life with what I call daisy theology. “He loves me, He loves me not. He loves me, He loves me not.” And you hope you end your life on “He loves me” cause you don’t know. You don’t know if you got the really big faith or you don’t know if you’ve got the faith that’s temporary – the temporary faith, the faith of a false professor. You don’t know if your works are temporary works or if they’re really enduring works. You can’t know that until you persevere, and you can’t persevere until you die ... kind of a tough position. Ultimately the person is not looking to Christ alone for eternal life, but they’re looking to Christ plus their perseverance.

There’s a fourth view that’s not the gospel, and this I call the combo approach. Now I don’t know if this is still Dr. Bock’s position, but in article in *BibSac* in 1989 and also in a message he gave in chapel here at

Dallas Seminary in 1991, he stated that the gospel of lordship salvation and the free grace gospel ... neither one is a false gospel; neither one is heretical. Both are the true gospel; both are orthodox. And also in the chapel message in 1991, he stated that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself sometimes gave simple invitations -- like the woman at the well. He described it like a gift on the table ... just take it. And then he said there are what he calls demand invitations -- like Jesus with the rich young ruler, where He made severe demands on the person's life. And he said maybe the problem is we're trying to find one gospel that applies to everybody. To me that approach, while it may sound good, doesn't fit at all with what the apostle Paul said in Galatians 1. He says, "If anyone preaches a gospel different to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed." Paul didn't preach multiple gospels. Paul preached one message, as I'm sure Dr. Bock believes. And that is the only saving message. And Paul preached "by faith alone." So it's not faith plus, not faith that includes, not faith that results in, and it's not a combo approach.

Finally, what about possible abuses of grace? I admit that the free grace of God allows for the possibility that the believer will abuse that grace. However, that's not to say that the grace of God promotes abuses. In fact, it's just the opposite. The grace of God spurs me to a life of love and gratitude and service for Christ. The apostle John said He laid down His life for us, so we ought to lay down our life for the brethren. Also, the fact is sin never pays. It is idiocy for a believer to walk in sin because sin is death-dealing. And also, obedience always pays – both now in terms of abundant life and in terms of the eternal kingdom where there will be degrees of reward depending on how we have lived for Christ now. What is the gospel? It is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which we receive the benefit of by faith alone. [Audience applauds].

Moderator:

Okay. We appreciate the men and their presentation. The second phase they're going to have a chance to question each other and answer each other, so we'd like them both to come up to the podium. And Bob is going to be the first to raise the questions, and he is going to direct his questions to Darrell.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay, my first question would be, what did the rich young ruler have to do to gain eternal life?

Dr. Bock:

The rich young ruler was in a position ... this is one of the demand passages that I talked about. The rich young ruler was in a position of needing to understand what his personal commitment to the world was all about. And so what Jesus did was challenge him at that level in a kind of what I would say was a pre-evangelism stage to make him aware of what his condition was. He basically walked away from the challenge.

Dr. Wilkin:

And the woman at the well of John 4?

Dr. Bock:

The woman at the well is an interesting example. In fact, I'm glad you asked about the woman at the well [audience laughs] ... because that's one of the simple demands we talked about. And I think if you trace the theme of water as the gift through the Gospel of John, you will see that the reference to water as a gift is a reference to the gift of life and the presence of the Spirit, which is what I defined as a key component of what the gospel gift involves.

Dr. Wilkin:

Would the woman at the well, without having the benefit of the rest of Scripture, just hearing what Jesus said in John 4, would she have the benefit of coming up with your conclusion about the Spirit and the relationship and the life transformation?

Dr. Bock:

Yes. Jesus said to her, “Those who worship God must worship God in spirit and in truth.”

Dr. Wilkin:

And ...

Dr. Bock:

That’s it.

Dr. Wilkin:

What’s the conclusion from that?

Dr. Bock:

Well the point is that He raises the very components that are required about a proper response to God in His address to her.

Dr. Wilkin:

Is ... so worshipping God, how is that linked to salvation?

Dr. Bock:

Well the point is is that it is very much linked to salvation. You can’t have a salvation being delivered unless there is someone divine delivering it.

Dr. Wilkin:

So do you have to worship God to be born again?

Dr. Bock:

I think the response ... I think the idea of coming to Christ as Lord is a recognition that He is the one who possesses authority over salvation.

Dr. Wilkin:

And where do we find in John 4 coming to Jesus as Lord?

Dr. Bock:

Well I think that it is implied in the whole idea of the discussion about worship. It is discussed in the idea that He is giving the gift, which is salvation, which lasts forever. Now who’s capable of doing that unless someone is going to hang around to be able to guarantee the benefits.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay, and practically speaking what does that mean in evangelism?

Dr. Bock:

Well I think, regardless of whether we’re talking about the rich young ruler or the Samaritan woman, the fundamental message of the gospel is about the life that is offered through Christ and the forgiveness of sins which sets the basis for it. It is my fundamental contention that you *cannot* respond to the gospel *only* on the basis of seeking forgiveness of sins.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay, I found your remarks about the Gospel of John interesting. Are you suggesting that the Gospel of John is not attempting to tell people how they may have eternal life?

Dr. Bock:

I'm saying that the Gospel of John never defines for us the contents of the gospel.

Dr. Wilkin:

And if it doesn't define the contents of the gospel ... is the gospel not the power of God unto salvation according to the ... [inaudible].

Dr. Bock:

That's the point I was making out of the Book of Romans.

Dr. Wilkin:

And if it is, isn't that what John is talking about all the way through his book?

Dr. Bock:

Well if it is, then you're agreeing with me. Because the point is that the reference to the power of God that Paul is alluding to is the power of the enablement that comes into the life through the gift of the Spirit.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay. I guess ... well alright, let's go to another question. Romans 10:13 ... would you explain that one to us?

Dr. Bock:

I'm sorry ...

Dr. Wilkin:

Romans 10:13, "He who calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved." What does that mean?

Dr. Bock:

Well, here's the point about that passage. That's a passage I like to use for the hard lordship people. And the reason I like to use it in relationship to them is because of the quantifying language about making Jesus Lord and that kind of thing. My point is, if you look at that passage, the emphasis on lordship has to do with the way in which the Lord distributes salvation benefits to Jew and Gentile alike. So the point is, lordship is a term about ... about the benefits that come from the authority that this Lord possesses. And so it is a term that underwrites the beneficence of the one who has the authority and the availability of that to Jew and Gentile alike.

Dr. Wilkin:

Now is that the gospel?

Dr. Bock:

That's part of the gospel ... sure it is. They're calling upon the name of the LORD to be delivered.

Dr. Wilkin:

Alright, one other question. Romans 10:14 says, "How show they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?" Are there believers or unbelievers who are calling upon the LORD?

Dr. Bock:

If you study that passage in context, you'll see that the whole point is about the taking of the message of the gospel to the Gentiles. That's the point of the entire context. And the calling upon the name of the LORD is the response ... it's part of a larger section up in verse 8 where it says that you confess Jesus Lord with your lips and then moves on to talk about it ... go ahead ...

Dr. Wilkin:

But it does say, “How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?”

Dr. Bock:

Well the point is is that with faith they call upon Him. That’s the point. All, all the calling upon Him is the expression of what faith does. The Lord works in the heart, the veil is removed (to use the language of 2nd Corinthians 3), the veil is removed, they turn to God, and they trust Him.

Moderator:

Okay.

Dr. Wilkin:

I’m out of time.

Moderator:

He’s out of time.

Dr. Wilkin:

I’d like to keep going on that. [Audience laughs].

Moderator:

We set up the parameters; we live by those parameters. [Audience laughs]. Okay. Dr Bock.

Dr. Bock:

Ya, let me ... let’s talk a little bit about the combo approach and the way you just handled the entire questioning. I find it fascinating that you went to John and to Acts and to Romans, which was a good combination. I think those are a good combination of passages to define what the gospel is. I guess what I would like to ask you is, how do you think Paul defines the gospel in Romans 1 when he introduces the concept and he talks about it in reference to the power of God?

Dr. Wilkin:

Well I would say in the Book of Romans, Paul is talking about deliverance from the wrath of God both eternally and here and now. To escape the wrath of God eternally, it’s by faith alone. To escape the wrath of God here and now, it’s by calling upon the name of the LORD, which we didn’t get enough chance to talk about in Romans 10:13. And it’s also by confessing His name ... confessing Him in Romans 10:9-10.

Dr. Bock:

Okay. Then why, when Jesus gives His great commission in Luke 24, is repentance an adequate summary term?

Dr. Wilkin:

I would say the same reason why baptism is an essential element of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 because the Great Commission is not necessarily about the gospel. The Great Commission, for example in Matthew, is about discipleship. And I take it the Great Commission in Luke is talking about going out and talking to people about fellowship with God. And in fact that’s what we see, I believe, in Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19. The first sermons out of the box in the Book of Acts where *metanoia* is mentioned do exactly that.

Dr. Bock:

Okay. So what you're saying is that there is a two step message that comes to the ... that comes to the ... comes to anyone hearing the gospel. One step having to do with gospel and the other step not having to do with the gospel?

Dr. Wilkin:

Uh, if you want to call them steps, but I would say that discipleship is distinct from justification, yes.

Dr. Bock:

Is it part of the gospel?

Dr. Wilkin:

No. How could discipleship be part of the gospel?

Dr. Bock:

Okay. Then I have this question for you which has come back to haunt you. [Audience laughs]. Is not Romans 1:16-17 a summary statement for the entire message of the theological unit of Romans dealing with individual salvation? Does it not cover Romans 1 to 8?

Dr. Wilkin:

Well, my view is that the gospel is not discussed all the way from Romans 1 thru 8, but there's a pivot at Romans 5:9 when it talks about that we're justified ... uh, we're going to be saved by His life. And I take it there's a pivot there in Romans 5:9, and from that point forward we're talking about sanctification not justification. And that we have justification in Romans 3, 4, and 5, with Romans 1 and 2 dealing with various excuses that people give.

Dr. Bock:

What indication is there in Romans that we've stopped talking about the gospel ... in Romans 6 and beyond?

Dr. Wilkin:

In Romans 5:9, "we shall be saved." He's already said we have been justified, and he says "we shall be saved by His life." How can it be a future salvation if we already have it?

Dr. Bock:

Okay, well I'll ask the questions from now on. [Audience starts laughing and continues laughing throughout the next six exchanges].

Dr. Wilkin:

Oh, I'm sorry.

Moderator:

That was rhetorical.

Dr. Bock:

I understand. I understand.

Dr. Wilkin:

Don't count that on his time.

Dr. Bock:

That's not going to be *reckoned* to your account.

Moderator:

Our laughing is [inaudible].

Dr. Wilkin:

I wasn't supposed to do that. I forgot.

Dr. Bock:

Okay. That's fair enough. [Audience laughter subsides]. Let's talk about the Acts testimony of Paul which also gives the commission, where the language of turning comes up as a summary, etcetera. I suppose, having listened to you now, that your answer with respect to that is going to be the same answer that we get with respect to Romans – that there is a distinction between justification and sanctification, and Paul, in this summary of his commission, is covering all of it all at once. Is that correct?

Dr. Wilkin:

Which one ... which one are you thinking of?

Dr. Bock:

The idea of turning ... turning to God ... turning to God ... that imagery ... turning to light from darkness, turning from Satan to God ... those images.

Dr. Wilkin:

Ya, I think what we have is two things. Like he says at one point, "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." I take it repentance is a turning to God, turning from sins to God for fellowship or harmony with Him. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is how a person is saved. And a person coming from darkness to light ... now that could refer, of course, from a Gentile who's lost in darkness of idolatry coming to faith in Christ. But it can also refer to a person, Jew or Gentile, who's in the darkness of sin who's coming into fellowship with God. And it would depend on the passage you're talking about.

Dr. Bock:

Ya, except in the commission in which he's preaching, he's in the process of trying to persuade these rulers, not only about what he's about, but he's hoping that they'll respond as well. So they're not ... he's speaking to people who are not "in" at the moment. And so I wonder if you can make that kind of distinction to make the text so broad ... the text so broad ... when that's the nature of his audience.

Dr. Wilkin:

I don't recall the text, so it's hard for me to pull it up. My computer's not working on that one.

Dr. Bock:

Okay. Let me do one other thing. In the 1st Thessalonians passage where it talks about turning from idols to God ... this parallels Acts 14, and the experience in Acts 14 parallels the preaching in Acts 17. [Moderator apparently indicates that time is running out]. Last question ... this will be the last question, okay ... [audience laughs]. Boy, that's strict. Alright, we're dealing with Acts 14, Acts 17, both of which are speeches to Gentiles telling them to turn from idols to God. What is it that the person was supposed to be hearing? Was he supposed to be hearing the gospel plus, or was he hearing the gospel?

Dr. Wilkin:

Well in 1st Thessalonians 1, as you know, it doesn't say anywhere there that turning to God from ... turning to God from idols to serve the living God, that that's the gospel. It doesn't say it anywhere there, and I don't think that is a statement of the gospel. In terms of the fact that if a person believes in idolatry, for them to turn from idolatry to God can put them in good position to come to faith, but that wouldn't save anyone. They've got to believe in the ... I'm sure you'd say that ... they've got to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. For an idolater to turn to believe in the one true living God would not ...

to become a Jew, for example, would not make him saved. He's got to believe in Jesus Christ. And it would even be possible (maybe you don't hold this) for a person to have superstitious beliefs, like horoscopes for example, and yet believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life. Now logically an idolater is not going to believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life because they're going to have something blocking them, but if they could escape that illogic, even an idolater could come to faith by believing in Christ for eternal life.

Dr. Bock:

Well I'm not allowed to follow-up either [Audience begins to laugh] so I guess [inaudible due to laughter].

Moderator:

Okay. Now you've heard the interaction. Perhaps they both could just summarize their position by summarizing what is the relationship between God's work of justification and God's work of sanctification. And Darrell, why don't you go first, and do it in a sentence or two. [Audience starts laughing]. And then Bob ... You have to understand, I teach with him see [audience laughs].

Dr. Bock:

I can do it in a sentence or two.

Dr. Wilkin:

... with a lot of commas.

Dr. Bock:

We love semicolons. [Audience laughs]. My fundamental argument is that justification and sanctification are distinguishable, but they are not divisible.

Moderator:

Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Wilkin:

O, about eleven years ago now, when I was teaching at Multnomah School of the Bible, Al Baylis said to me, "The real distinction on the gospel question is how much of a division, if any, you put between justification and sanctification." And he was right on the money. The *soft* lordship position like the *hard* lordship position cannot divide the two. The gospel can.

Moderator:

Okay. So you would say that justification is distinct ...

Dr. Wilkin:

... from progressive sanctification.

Moderator:

Okay.

Dr. Wilkin:

Not from past sanctification but from progressive sanctification.

Moderator:

Good. What we would like to do is take about 15 or 20 minutes of your questions. Then we'll take a break, and whoever wants to reconvene after about 5 minutes can do so. But let's take about 10 to 15, 20 minutes of your questions. Yes sir ...

Questioner 1 from Audience:

Is it ... I'm wondering, we're so narrowly defining the gospel here, does Paul ... are both of them going to respond to this? ...

Moderator:

Just question, then we'll direct it. [Audience laughs].

Questioner 1 from Audience:

I'm wondering how broadly does Paul define the gospel? For you [Dr. Bock] it seems that he defines it as justification, sanctification, all the first part of Romans. For you [Dr. Wilkin] it seems that he defines it as what you have to do to initially come into fellowship with God.

Moderator:

Okay. The questions is, and he answered the question as well ... [audience laughs] ... the question is, how narrowly do we define the gospel? So Bob why don't you answer it, and then Darrell you can answer it.

Dr. Wilkin:

Well, what I've been discussing here, and I believe this is the intended point of the question, "What is the gospel?", is not is there any use of the word *euangelion* or *euangelizō* in the New Testament that refers to something other than the good news of Jesus Christ concerning eternal life. But we're answering the question, "what is the good news of Jesus Christ concerning how one obtains eternal life?" And Paul's answer to that is, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast."

Dr. Bock:

And I guess my fundamental premise is is that this discussion is about clarity on the gospel. I don't have any problem defining the scope of the gospel in the way in which it is defined by Paul in Romans.

Moderator:

Okay ... the front has priority here. Yes sir ...

Questioner 2 from Audience:

This is for Dr. Wilkin. Is it possible to make a false profession of faith? And related to this, how do you understand what James is talking about in chapter 2:14 and following?

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay. Is it possible to make a false profession? And what does James mean in James 2? Yes, it's possible to make a false profession. And what a false profession of faith would be would be someone who is professing to believe in Christ for eternal life and that wasn't. If they're professing some other faith, well that's not a profession of faith in Christ. They're not really professing the gospel. That's why I say we've got to inspect the root, not the fruit. What are they trusting in? The Kennedy question, "Why should God let you into heaven?" is the key question. In terms of James 2:14 and following, I would suggest that the word salvation or *sōzō* in James is always, except for 4:12 which is general, is dealing with the issue of deliverance from the wrath of God here and now. And it's saying that if a believer turns his back on a fellow brother and sister in need, he cannot escape the judgment of God.

Moderator:

Okay ... yes sir.

Questioner 3 from Audience:

Piggybacking off that ... if you can have a false profession of faith, how is that any different ... how's that any different than perseverance, since you don't really know if you have the root as opposed to the fruit? And secondly, 1st John 5:18, how do you interpret the passage, "whoever is born of God does not sin ... no one who is born of God sins"?

Dr. Wilkin:

In terms of 1st John 5:18, I take the absolute sense. No one who is born of God sins. 1 John 3:9. He can't sin because the seed of God abides in him. That is, the born again aspect of every believer is sinless. We never sin as an expression of the new birth. Secondly, the other part of your question was ...?

Questioner 3 from Audience:

If you can make a false profession of faith, how is that any different than perseverance?

Dr. Wilkin:

I'm not saying that a person who is trusting or believing in Christ alone for eternal life has made a false profession of faith. He asked does such a thing exist. The answer is yes. But that is a person who doesn't believe the gospel or is lying. In other words, a person could lie and say, "I believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life and Him alone," but they don't. Or they could say something else, but it's not trusting Christ. Those are false professors. But I know that I'm not a false professor because I know I believe the gospel. I know I believe what Jesus says.

Moderator:

Okay, we were going back ... there we go. Yes sir.

Questioner 4 from Audience:

Yes, gentlemen, I would like to ask both of you how you distinguish between ... um, how would you answer the question, how does my gospel reject works as a indicator to me that I'm saved? In other words ... [inaudible] ..., how do I know that my gospel is excluding salvation by works, especially in light of it depending on a possible perseverance on my part?

Moderator:

Okay, how do I exclude works from the content of the gospel?

Dr. Bock:

Well, my fundamental contention is is that the person who is responding to the gospel is responding to the Person of Jesus Christ. Period. He's responding to the Person of Jesus Christ with regard to forgiveness, with regard to the provision for life, and with regard to the promise of eternal life. Okay. Now what that means is is that there is nothing I am bringing to the moment of faith other than my calling upon Him.

Dr. Wilkin:

Dr. Gerstner, before he died, said that perseverance in good works is a condition of eternal salvation; it's just not a meritorious condition of eternal salvation ... which I believe is Dr. Bock's position. I strongly disagree with that. Perseverance in good works is not a condition of eternal salvation or final salvation, whether meritorious or non-meritorious. The only condition is believing in Christ for eternal life. It's possible that I may experience great failure in my Christian life. That's why I exercise great diligence to remain steadfast in the faith because I know it's possible I might not. And I would assume that Dr. Bock would maintain that same diligence as well.

Moderator:

Okay, let's question his assumption.

Dr. Bock:

I would disagree with the statement that I hold that perseverance is a condition of salvation. I think that a person who is born again by the Spirit of God is impacted by that work of God as a result of their ... as a result, as part of the gift they get when they exercise the faith that saves. So it's not a condition of anything.

Dr. Wilkin:

Can I follow-up on ...?

Dr. Bock:

Well let me make just one more point, and it will be a little bit rhetorical. And since you wanted to discuss where we are different from one another, I'll put it in a picture. Okay? I do not think that God regenerates someone in order to give birth to an abortion. Now, let me make one qualifying statement on the other end. The problem that I see in MacArthur's articulation of the gospel, at least as far as *The Gospel According to Jesus*' first edition went, was that I don't think he had a way of dealing with the reality of carnality. Now I think on this we're going to agree ... that the problem of the Reformed tradition, when it is stated in its hardest form, is that it cannot deal with the category of carnality. And by the time you're listening to them deal with it, you've wondered if the category even exists. Okay. I see that as a problem as well. You refer to my view as a combo view. The real essence of what I'm arguing for is I think there is a danger on each side of this discussion that we have to be careful about. On the one end, so defining saving faith that the actual work of God means very little in a person's life when they respond. That's my concern for the free grace side.

[My copy of tape 1 stops here and then restarts on the same side of the tape with the following:]

Dr. Wilkin:

First of all, this is the first time ... I didn't know we were talking about commitment. You said, "the nature of the commitment we make up front". I didn't know there was a commitment we made up front. I thought it was simply believing in Christ for eternal life. But secondly, it seems to me if you're saying that believers may fall into carnality to such an extent that they could die completely away from the Lord, that would clearly be denying perseverance. I don't think that's what you're saying. And if you're saying that all believers persevere ... all truly regenerated people persevere ... then it would seem to me no believer could be sure they were saved until they died, because any of us could fail to persevere.

Dr. Bock:

I haven't used the word perseverance on purpose. [Audience laughs]. Okay. All that I've said is that the gospel transaction ... okay ... the faith, the faith decision ... commitment, whatever [inaudible] ... the faith, the faith decision changes the person. They are a new creation afterwards. And we have to ask the question what the effect is of the presence of the Spirit in the person. Okay. I would argue that the New Testament argues that there is a change in that person as a result of the Spirit coming in. That's part of the gift. And that that change evidences itself, not as a condition of salvation, but as a reflection of the fact that God has entered into the life and saved the person.

Moderator:

Okay.

[This is the end of the first side of the tape 1. Side two of tape1 starts as follows:]

Moderator:

Okay ... let's go on. Yes sir.

Questioner 5 from Audience:

How would you distinguish ... it seems to me like there may be a second question here ... not just what was the condition for eternal life, but what is the condition for *knowing* you have eternal life?

Moderator:

Okay. The question is, what is the condition for *knowing* you have eternal life? Bob, you want to go first?

Dr. Wilkin:

The question is do I believe that Jesus guarantees eternal life to every one who simply believes in Him. I do. So therefore I am sure.

Dr. Bock:

I think the way I would answer that question is that assurance is a function of faith. Now, what I mean by that is the person who trusts Christ ... okay ... can have assurance. Now this raises the question of what a discussion I think we're headed for, and that is, what about the person who denies Christ? What about the person who at one point believed, said they believed, participated as if they believed, and they walk away? Okay. Since for me assurance is a function of faith – salvation is by faith, not by denial – and it's Christologically based, if the person ceases to believe or articulates that they do not believe, it seems to me what they may be reflecting is the possibility ... and I'm wording this very carefully on purpose ... is the possibility that they never exercised genuine saving faith to begin with. At least that option has to be open. Now let me give the illustration of the type of person I'm talking about. I think that Judas is an illustration of the kind of situation that we're talking about. I think if you had asked ... and some people say this is irrelevant, and I will say it's very relevant ... I think if you had asked the other eleven if Judas was one of the boys, they would have said "sure." And every one of us, on the basis potentially of a free grace position, would have been assuring Judas all along that he was in. When he walked away, he revealed something about himself in my view. And I have to have, within my understanding of the gospel, a scenario that can deal with someone like Judas.

Moderator:

Okay. Let's go back there. Yes sir.

Questioner 6 from Audience: [This question is a bit difficult to follow. See the moderator's summary below].

A question for you [Dr. Wilkin] that has been in my mind quite a bit is you had said that under the soft lordship, or any sort of lordship position, that repentance works. I can't remember which position it was ... trust that includes works. Based on Luke 24:47, that says repentance, and other things that do ... I understand from your position as well as some others ... from Ryrie and people like that ... that say repentance is merely just a changing of mind about who Christ is. Is that correct?

Dr. Wilkin:

Not any more. I mean for me.

Moderator:

He's metaphorical too. [Audience laughs].

Questioner 6 from Audience:

So let me ask you a question then. So do you not believe that repentance is ... in any sort of form ... whether or not its either definition is required for ... because if it is merely a changing of mind about who Christ is, then literally that is also a work as well as repentance from sin.

Moderator:

Okay. Let me try to restate your question. Is repentance a work or a condition of salvation?

Dr. Wilkin:

This is a good question. The reason I said “not any more” is because I wrote my doctoral dissertation here on repentance as a condition for salvation in the New Testament. And I’ve since repented of my views [audience laughs]. When I wrote the dissertation, I suggested that *metanoia* or *metanoēō* is a change of mind, and you must look at the context. And in many places it is a change of mind about sin or a change of mind about our behavior. But in the saving context it’s a change of mind about Christ, and it’s a synonym for faith in Christ. I’ve now come to the conclusion, as I look at the passages on *metanoia* and *metanoēō*, that there’s not one passage that uses those words where it’s a condition of eternal life. The places where I would have said before it was a condition of eternal life, I would say now it’s a condition for fellowship with God, and that that’s the issue. And that ... it’s you can either say this is a change of mind about their behavior or you can say it’s turning from their sins or whatever. And is repentance a work? I would say yes, repentance is a work. Is repentance required to be saved? I’d say no. And one key thing which I mentioned in my dissertation, but I didn’t let it soak in enough ... Dr. Bock kind of seems to push this aside, but there’s only one evangelistic book in Scripture, and it’s the Gospel of John -- only one book whose purpose is to tell the unbeliever how to have eternal life. And yet, while “believe” occurs 99 times (*pisteuō*), “repent” and “repentance” occur zero times. It seems to me if John felt that *metanoia* was a condition of eternal life, he would have mentioned it at least once, especially since he mentions John the Baptist over and over again and never mentions that he preached a baptism of repentance.

Moderator:

Okay. Let’s get a couple more questions, and then we’re gonna take a break. I’m sorry ... right in the middle here. Yes sir.

Questioner 7 from the audience:

I have a ... [inaudible] ... question here. Does justification guarantee sanctification? Why or why not?

Moderator:

Okay. The question is ... that was a simple one ... does justification guarantee sanctification? And then, why or why not? Darrell, do you want to start with that?

Dr. Bock:

Ya. My view is that justification does guarantee a degree of sanctification. And I think the whole thrust of Romans 6 to 8 is the point. And, if I can piggyback and make a point on what Bob was saying a minute ago, I find it hard to believe that we can limit the discussion about evangelism to the Gospel of John when the Gospel of John does not use the word “gospel” or “good news.” And the point that I am making about the nature of defining the gospel is Paul is the one who has made the term so predominant in our vocabulary. If that’s the case, I think we should be sensitive to how Paul defines the term. And in it he includes both reference to justification and sanctification. And I think he is arguing there is a degree of sanctification in every person who is born again.

Dr. Wilkin:

My response would be that at the moment of justification past sanctification takes place. Those are synonymous terms. Justification guarantees ultimate sanctification – one day we will be just like Him (1 John 3:2). In terms of progressive sanctification, the way it is normally thought of, I would say, no, justification does not guarantee progressive sanctification. A believer can be worse after their salvation than before. I’m not saying that a believer could go through an entire lifetime without having done any good works. What I’m saying is, and I’m sure Dr. Bock would agree, if a person did sporadic good works and their life was continual carnality, that would not be progressive sanctification. So my answer would be that no, progressive sanctification is not guaranteed. And by the way, that’s why all through the New Testament we have commands to persevere. Why would we have commands to persevere to

progressive sanctification if it's guaranteed? Why would we need that? We would just be told you're going to do this.

Moderator:

I'm in the middle of fire here now. [Audience laughs].

Dr. Bock:

There is a very simple answer to your question. And it is ...

Dr. Wilkin:

Somehow I knew there would be.

Dr. Bock:

Paul preaches ... that Paul preaches the obedience of faith with reference to the gospel (Romans 1:5).

Dr. Wilkin:

And what is that?

Dr. Bock:

That is responding to the very enablement that God has given you as a part of the gift that you come for when you trust Him.

Dr. Wilkin:

Well, see I take the view there, as I think you know, that that is simply saying obeying the faith. This is an objective genitive. And that what we're talking about here is ... and we see this ... I know you've mentioned it in various articles ... a great many priests were obedient to the faith. We find in Peter (1 Peter) he talks about being obedient or disobedient to faith. That simply means believing the gospel. As you know, Acts 16:31 is a command. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." If I've believed that, then I've obeyed the faith. So I would just hold a different view of Romans 1:5.

Dr. Bock:

As long as the gospel is defined in the way Paul defines it in Romans, I can affirm everything you've just said.

Moderator:

Okay. There's a lot of questions that still remain, but we promised you that after one hour we would take a break. And let's take a break until about 18 minutes after eight. And then we'll come back and we'll try and entertain those questions.

[This is the end of side 2 of tape 1. Side 1 of tape 2 begins as follows:].

Moderator [apparently rephrasing questioner 8 from the audience who was not picked up in the taping]: Can I repeat the question? In using the word "believe," does it have the same sense when it's used with reference to the gospel and then when it's used in James 2 with respect to the demons?

Dr. Wilkin:

Yes. My answer is yes. The reason I mention "believe" a lot is because that's what the Bible says the condition of salvation is. It's sad to me that I've heard lots of gospel presentations where a person will go on and on about how you need to commit your life to Christ, turn your life to Christ, receive Christ, invite Him in, do this, do that, and never even mention believing. To me that's appalling. As far as James 2:19, "the demons believe," sure, that's true faith. Don't they believe in monotheism? The text tells us they tremble. In fact, I would go so far as to say the demons believe the gospel. They know that every human

being who believes the gospel has eternal life. That's why it says in Luke 8:12, Satan snatches away the seed "lest they should believe and be saved." But the gospel doesn't apply to demons. The gospel only applies to human beings ... living human beings, by the way. So once a person dies, even if they believe the gospel in hell, which I take it everybody someday will believe the gospel, don't you think? [Audience laughs]. It only applies to living human beings. Jesus didn't die for demons. So yes, faith is faith. Faith is always the conviction that something is true. Saving faith is the conviction the gospel is true.

Moderator:

Did you [directed toward Dr. Bock] want to...? You didn't want to touch it ... I know [audience laughs]. Yes sir.

Questioner 9 from Audience:

This is directed initially to Dr. Pickin ... the phrase that ...

Dr. Wilkin:

I think that was a slur. [Audience laughs].

Questioner 9 from Audience:

I'd like to hear your comments ... the phrase that we have here that "we're saved by faith alone, but saving faith is not alone," you said you disagree with. I'm just wondering, in your understanding, is there anything in that understanding that is good ... that you would say you agree with? [Inaudible]. And then Dr. Bock also respond to that. I'm guessing that your view is pretty close to that. And I'm wondering [inaudible].

Moderator:

Okay. Why don't you repeat the question. I didn't catch that phrase.

Dr. Wilkin:

Ya, I'm not sure I got it either.

Questioner 9 from the Audience:

It was on the page that you have.

Dr. Wilkin:

Oh ya ... Okay, I've got it. The question was ... and by the way, what I was joking about is that I think you said "Pickin" and it's Wilkin. Pickin sounds too much like picky [audience laughs].

Questioner 9 from the Audience:

Oh ... I'm sorry.

Moderator:

A pure Freudian slip.

Dr. Wilkin:

However, I did get the obsessive compulsive award here for seven years in a row ... from 1978 and 85 I was O.C. of the Year here. But in terms of the question, "we're saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone" ... do I like any of that? Ya. "We're saved by faith alone." [Audience laughs].

Dr. Bock:

I'm actually pretty comfortable with that idea. The point is that with regeneration there is a change. With a change there is a product.

Moderator:

Okay. I was getting the back in there. Yes sir.

Questioner 10 from Audience: [the questioner spoke with an accent and it was difficult to determine precisely what he was he was saying]:

I'm taking the more historical approach. In the 2nd century church [inaudible] ... Irenaeus ... I guess it was Justin the Martyr ... [inaudible] ... who spoke of Simon Magus from Acts 8 as being the father of all heretics. And one of the main accusations to him was that he preached that we are saved by grace alone. It is too by faith but irrespective of our repentance. And this was one of the big accusations that was against him. The same happens in the time of the Reformation where it's true *sola fide* is used but not *sola tagra[?] fide*, which means exactly your view [apparently referring to Dr. Wilkin] ... *sola fide* including repentance. And if you read Luther and Calvin and others ... definitely preach repentance. How is your response to that? Who in the entire history of the church held or holds, helds ... whatever ...? [Audience laughs].

Moderator:

Okay. Let me try and summarize it for you. Who in the history of the church has held the position that it is by faith alone period, without the inclusion of repentance?

Dr. Wilkin:

Well, let me suggest that prior to the Reformation I'm sure there were many people, but I can't give you a list. In fact, Torrance ... Dr. Torrance ... Thomas F. Torrance has a book called *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (the disciples of the apostles). And in it he says to a man they lost the concept of grace. In fact, the reason the Western Church is what it is today and has been what it is, is because that's what happened after the apostles left the scene. The Shepherd of Hermas came along and said you could only have one repentance after salvation ... 2nd century document as you know. And it's interesting, prior to that they couldn't have any. So guess what people did. They were told at baptism you got a clean slate. So people wait until their death beds to be baptized. Church says bad deal here. So what they did is one repentance. So then people would be baptized and then, guess when they waited for their repentance? Death bed. So then they changed and they said, no, you can have multiple repentance. And later on it even became indulgences. You could pay in advance; pay as you go. It was a wonderful plan [audience laughs]. And you see the problem with all that is it's salvation by works -- the whole thing. And so I can't give you a list of specific people. But the point is I would hold to the view I hold to if I was the only person in the history of the world that I knew of that held it, because I want to encourage every one here to stand on the Scriptures, not stand on the majority position ... because, for one thing, if you took the majority position you'd be Roman Catholic ... and if not, you'd be Eastern Orthodox ... and if not, you'd be Arminian. And it would be way down the line before you got taught what was taught here.

Questioner 10 from Audience:

Why do you quote the Reformers then for your position?

Dr. Wilkin:

Well ... should I [apparently looking to the moderator direction as to whether to answer the follow-up question] ...

Moderator:

Repeat it.

Dr. Wilkin:

Well in terms of the Reformers ... why wouldn't I go to the Reformers for my pos ... why did I state the Reformers? I was using that as simply a platform to build upon. But actually you're right. If the

Reformers said a view completely different than what I'm saying, it wouldn't bother me, because I stand on the Scriptures. Now the fact ... I happen to believe that the Reformers were not saying what you're saying. But let me say this, there are people who devote their whole lives to study Luther. They're Luther scholars. There are people who devote their whole lives to studying Calvin. I do not. And I'm not going to wade into that. So if you can prove to me that they both held a different view, then I'll say I disagree with the Reformers. I don't think they did, but if they did, okay, I disagree.

Moderator:

Yes sir.

Questioner 11 from Audience:

Yes. Is the gospel the objective work of Christ alone, or is the gospel my response to that objective work? Second question, what did the objective work of Christ alone accomplish?

Moderator:

Okay. There's two questions. Is the gospel the objective work of Christ alone or my response to that? The second question, what did the objective work of Christ alone accomplish?

Dr. Bock:

Okay, I'd like to know what you mean by "objective work." What do you have in mind?

Questioner 11 from Audience:

The historical finished ... the historical work of God in Christ ... is that the gospel?

Dr. Bock:

Well, if you're asking me is the gospel just the cross ...

Questioner 11 from Audience:

No. I'm saying His life ... His life ... His perfect life which our righteousness comes from, His death which purchased the ... conquered the dominion of sin, and then His reigning resurrection.

Dr. Bock:

Well, I think if you define it that probably then, yes, what we're talking about in the gospel is the good news of what the Person and work of Christ is offering as a gift to those who come to Him in faith.

Questioner 11 from Audience:

So the gospel ...

Dr. Bock:

And it's grounded in ... I think I'll answer your question. It's grounded in His work on the cross. It's grounded in the nature of His Person. It's grounded in the position that He has, okay, which allows Him to distribute the benefits that are being talked about. Okay.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay. Let me answer these backwards. What did the work of Christ accomplish? I take the view that Dr. Chafer took on John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" I take the view that Jesus made every single person of all time savable by His death on the cross. He doesn't save them. He makes them savable. And now the question is, "Will they receive the gift of life?" In terms of the first half of your question, "Is the gospel the objective work of Christ alone or the objective work of Christ plus our faith response?" Ultimately you could look at either way. But let's put it this way. No one is going to receive the benefit of the saving work of Christ without believing in Him. And so the

result is the gospel has to incorporate the response or else all you have is Someone who has made the world savable but if people don't believe in Him, they don't get safe.

Moderator:

Okay ... in the back there. Thank you.

Questioner 12 from the Audience:

You obviously both believe that salvation is by faith alone and that the object of that faith is Christ. Could both speakers comment, what do I have to believe about Christ in order to be saved?

Moderator:

Okay, the question is, based on what they share in common, what do they have to believe about Christ in order to be saved?

Dr. Bock:

Want me to go first?

Moderator:

Please.

Dr. Bock:

I have to believe that my sin separates me from God outside of Christ. Have to believe that Christ is (to use Bob's phrase) the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Need to believe that He is capable of delivering that which He is promising, that is, forgiveness, life, life enablement if you will, eternal life.

Dr. Wilkin:

I would make a slight change. Instead of saying "He's capable of," that He actually has already delivered it at the moment I believe. What I would say, John 20:31, the signs which John gave have been given "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." That's *pisteuō hoti*, that you might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you will have life in His name." Any one that believes that in the sense John means it has eternal life. And how does John mean it? A perfect place to go is John 11:25-27, cause Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." And then He explains as the resurrection He says, "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he will live. And he who lives and believes in Me will never die" ... clearly referring to spiritual death because He has just said, "He who believes in me, though he may die, he will live." Dying physically, he will live. That's bodily resurrection in the resurrection of the righteous. "And he who lives and believes in me will never die." That's eternal security. And so the point there is Jesus then says, "Do you believe this?" And her response is, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." For Martha, "the Christ, the Son of God" means He's the Guarantor of eternal life. So in a nutshell I would say the gospel is, "he who believes in Me has everlasting life." He's the Guarantor. If you believe that, you have eternal life. If you don't believe that, you don't have eternal life. So that if a person says, "I've received Jesus, but I don't know if I have eternal life," the person does not believe the gospel ... because Jesus says, "Do you believe this?" and she doesn't say "Well man, I don't know. It could have been temporary faith. Maybe I'm not going to persevere. Maybe those transformations that are supposed to come might not come." You know ... she didn't go to seminary. She didn't know all that. She just said, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Moderator:

Okay. Let me try and get some that we haven't gotten. Yes sir.

Questioner 13 from the Audience:

In each of your positions, what would be the function of the Holy Spirit?

Moderator:

Okay. In each of the positions, what is the function of the Holy Spirit?

Dr. Bock:

The function of the Holy Spirit, in my position, probably can be boiled down to three elements. The Spirit is at work in the heart of the person who is in the process of coming to the Lord, taking the veil away from their eyes. The Spirit enters into the life at the faith decision, making me a new creation. The Spirit is the seal of the deal when it's all done, sealing me and marking me out as God's child.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay. I would go for four. And I'll add a fifth because of the convicting work, but at the moment of salvation four things occur. RIBS. You heard this little budac? Regeneration. Indwelling. Baptizing. Sealing. And the Holy Spirit does all of those. At the moment of faith regeneration occurs, He indwells us, He baptizes us into the body of Christ, and He seals us forever. And, of course, I would agree with Dr. Bock that He is convicting us and drawing us to Him. I would say one thing. I'm not comfortable speaking of a "faith decision." I know you've mentioned this several times. Because I don't believe that faith is a decision. I believe faith is a conviction that something is true. And once I see the gospel for what it is, I believe it. Acts 16:14, the Lord opens Lydia's heart that she might believe the things ... that she might heed the things spoken by Paul and Silas. Once the Lord opens our heart, we believe the gospel. And, of course, if we're responding to Him drawing us, then He will bring us more light and more light, and ultimately He'll open our heart. And when He does, we will believe the gospel.

Dr. Bock:

Well all "faith decision" language is ... and we may just be in a semantic game here ... is the idea that I have believed ... okay ... the point that there was a point at which a response was made.

Dr. Wilkin:

You know we're criticized a lot on our side for "decisionism."

Dr. Bock:

Ya.

Dr. Wilkin:

I'm just saying, not only don't I believe in "decisionism" in terms of walking aisles, ... I don't tell anybody to decide to believe in Christ. I just say here's what Jesus does, here's who He is. Believe it or don't believe it.

Dr. Bock:

Well if I were to say "faith moment" or just "faith," I'd be saying the same thing. Okay?

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay.

Moderator:

Let me try and get some ... yes sir.

Questioner 14 from the Audience:

I have a question for both of you. You both have spoken of faith being a requirement for salvation. One person said that the death and resurrection is essential for salvation ... and then you're saved by faith alone. My question is, is faith an agent of salvation? Is it something that God is waiting for for us to

meet so that He imparts salvation? Or is faith part of the package of salvation as I would understand Ephesians 2:8 and 9, John 1 and Romans 9, when it talks about we're not saved by the will of man but by the will of God? And, if so, if God has a purpose in saving us ... a sovereign purpose ... what would stop Him from having a sovereign purpose in producing good works in our lives?

Moderator:

Okay. I think that there are two questions there. Is faith a gift or an agent ... human agent? And then, if it is a gift, does God not have a purpose in completing that gift? Bob, I think that's probably directed to you.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay. I would say that the gift is salvation, for example in Ephesians 2:8-9. And we find that consistent with many other passages in Scripture ... that salvation is the gift, not faith. I don't buy the view that regeneration precedes faith, which is where that's going obviously. Because even if you say logically that regeneration precedes faith, then what you're saying is a person is born again before they believe. That's not true temporally, and it's not true logically. They have to occur simultaneously. My view is that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Now it is true Romans 3:11 says no one seeks God, no, not one. And I believe what that's saying is, left to our own initiative, none of us would seek God. But we know from Acts 10 that Cornelius was seeking God. And, in fact, that his alms and his prayers ascended to God as a pleasing aroma, and that God sent an angel to give him the message to send for Peter. And, by the way, here's one dead in his trespasses and sins that understood a message from God ... and sent for Peter. Peter came and brought him the gospel, and he came to faith. So my view is that no one would come to faith apart from the drawing of God, that God is drawing all, and if we respond, we can come to faith. But God doesn't draw all equally. He draws some more than others. He could certainly bring every one to faith in Christ if He gave everybody continual Damascus road experiences. And there is such a thing as hardening of the heart where if we turn our back against the gospel over and over and over again, at some point it may be like Jesus turning to the nation of Israel with parables, because they've come to the point where they've hardened their heart one time too often. So there is an accountability, and people need to respond to the light they have. And if they do, God will give them more light and ultimately the gospel.

Questioner 14 from the Audience:

So I'm ultimately saved because of my response ... ultimately.

Dr. Wilkin:

A person is saved because of the death and resurrection of Christ. But the human condition or requirement is faith ... now cause that's what Jesus said, "He who believes in me has everlasting life."

Moderator:

Darrell, you want to ...

Dr. Bock:

Ya. Just briefly, the question that's asked is kind of an either/or. Elliot knows where I'm headed with the answer to that one don't you? [Audience laughs]. I really think the Scripture teaches a both/and on this, and I don't pretend to be able to sort out the "both" from the "and". I really believe there are some texts in which you look at it and it looks as if it's our response and it's put that kind of way and in that kind of language. There are other texts that talk about God drawing and my not being able to see without the veil being pulled away. And I'm not going to pretend I have a clue how to know when one stops and the other starts. I do know that when it's all said and done, I am grateful to the Lord for what He has done in my life. And there is no basis for boasting in that at all. Ya ... go ahead [speaking to Questioner 14 from the audience who had begun to follow-up].

Questioner 14 from the Audience:

The second part of my question was, does God have a purpose in saving man ... [inaudible]?

Dr. Bock:

Well ... I think my answer to your second question is simply, I think I've pretty clearly tried to state my answer already. The answer is, yes, I think God has a purpose for entering into our life, and I think He works to accomplish that purpose. But again, I'm going to tell you, that when it comes to the issue of obedience and disobedience for the believer, that there are things that go on in that complex process I can't in a detailed way articulate to you. Now I pastorally have to deal with them all the time ... in myself and in those around me. But if you ask me, why does it happen this way and not that since God's behind it all? ... okay ... I can't answer those questions.

Moderator:

Let's, let's ... yes ma'am.

Questioner 15 from the Audience:

Dr. Bock, you have stated that justification and sanctification are distinguishable yet not distinct ...

Dr. Bock:

Not divisible.

Questioner 15 from the Audience:

Not divisible.

Dr. Bock:

Uh huh.

Questioner 15 from Audience:

If that is true then, if you're blending a portion of sanctification with justification, how is that not a combo view, as Dr. Wilkin says?

Dr. Bock:

Great question. Okay. It's a terrific question.

Moderator:

Do you want to restate it, or do you want me to?

Dr. Bock:

I'll let you restate it. [Audience laughs].

Moderator:

Question is, if you're blending justification with any aspect of sanctification, how is that not a combo view?

Dr. Bock:

Great question. Okay. You got to follow ... this is actually pretty simple. By "distinguishable" I mean you can tell that this is justification and this is sanctification. By "indivisible" I mean that justification moves into and flows into sanctification. Okay. And the point that was raised earlier from the question over here is the idea, is there sanctification that goes on as a result of justification? My answer to that question is yes. Okay.

Questioner 15 from Audience:

But does that change what justification is?

Dr. Bock:

No. Justification, the part that is divisible and definable, is the idea that justification is the declaration by God that I am righteous. Okay. But there is also, with the justification, the imparting of life. The imparting of life then moves into sanctification. The one point I'm arguing against ... poor Bob, he's been busy arguing against lots of things ... I'm arguing against one fundamental thing. And that is the idea that justification and sanctification are divisible. Okay. That's the one thing I'm arguing against.

Moderator:

Bob, do you want to ...

Dr. Wilkin:

Ya, just briefly ... I would reiterate the point that if you say that justification and sanctification are not divisible, then you have some sense in which, at the point of justification, a person is aware of the demands of sanctification. And in fact, they can't be justified without, in some sense, acknowledging and responding to the demands of sanctification. And that's why I would say you call it soft lordship.

Dr. Bock:

That's not what I'm saying ... okay ... very, very important. This is extremely important. Here's what I'm saying. I cannot understand my need for the gospel and forgiveness unless I understand why my sin caused Jesus Christ to die. And if that is the case, and if I understand that I am separated from God as a result, all that I want in calling upon Him is the life He gives. Now that life is not just life eternal. That life is the life He is capable of providing for me to make me a child of God. That's what I want.

Dr. Wilkin:

Okay. My practical question, if I could follow-up on that ...

Dr. Bock:

Sure.

Dr. Wilkin:

... would be, if you have a person that wants eternal life, but they don't want their life to change at all ... they don't want to turn from their alcoholism ... they don't want God to change it ... they want eternal life. Can they have that?

Dr. Bock:

I answered this question in a piece years ago. Okay. [Audience laughs]. I could tell you a long story that involves Professor Hodges and me, but I won't. He and I and Bob all know it. Okay. Let me just say it this way. What I come to the gospel for is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Period. Now that has with it all kinds of implications which work themselves out in the process of coming into that life. I don't make any promises about what I'm going to do when I respond to the gospel. All that I'm saying is, "Give me this life." Now, if I come and I say, "I want forgiveness of sins and I want to get to heaven, but I don't want You to be involved with me." Period. That's not responding to the gospel. [Some applause from the audience].

Dr. Wilkin:

I knew it was going to be bloody, I ... [inaudible]. [Audience laughs].

Moderator:

There's a triumvirate over here now.

[At this point the taping stops on side 1 of tape 2 and restarts on the same side with the following. Apparently they stopped recording some of the actual questions from the audience at this point]:

Dr. Bock:

Okay. Both of those are excellent questions. [I am referring to these questions as questions 16 and 17. Both questions, as asked by the audience members, were omitted from my copy of the tapes. They are, however, apparently summarized by Dr. Bock below].

Moderator:

Why don't you repeat them then?

Dr. Bock:

If I can remember them. I think the first one ... well, let me do the second one first. How, if he is looking to his works, can he ever have the knowledge of peace and joy? You're really asking me how can someone be assured that they're trusting Christ ... okay ... to boil it down. I think both of those questions involve that in one way or another. My own view of assurance is that it's tied Christologically to trusting Christ. Okay. And what I mean by that is this. If someone denies ... if I ask them where they are and they deny that they're connected to Christ ... if they say something like, "I used to believe that, but I don't believe that any more." Something to that effect, okay. Then I'm not going to make any effort to give them assurance about where they are. Now here's something I won't do that some stronger, more stringent lordship people will do ... okay. I won't turn around say, "Then you're not saved." Okay. I don't know. That's my point. And, so what I would do with them pastorally is to affirm the idea that salvation is by faith in Christ and that assurance is attached to my identification with Him. And I would leave it there.

Dr. Wilkin:

Can I ... ?

Moderator:

Sure. Of course.

Dr. Wilkin:

I would just quickly respond with two things. In the first place, if you take the view, which I believe you do, that Luke 8:13 refers to temporary faith, "they believe for a time and in time of temptation fell away," then certainly that could be true of any one in this audience. Therefore nobody here could be absolutely sure they have eternal life, if you hold the view that a person has temporary faith is not saved. And secondarily, I believe you take the view that 2nd ... I've read that you take this view ... you've written in it ... you take 2nd Corinthians 13:5 as a test to see if we're in the faith in terms of salvation. If that's the case, and if that's something we're to do regularly, then how could any one ever say, "I'm absolutely certain that I have eternal life"? ... because I always could fall away in the future. And if I fall away, then wouldn't I prove that I'm probably not saved?

Dr. Bock:

No. Your question is a good one because I didn't answer the second question that he raised, and I need to do that. Let me say it this way. For me, the presence of works are not an evidence of justification in the way they're traditionally talked about. Okay. And by that I mean it's not a condition of salvation or condition of determining salvation, if you will. Okay. It is a product of salvation. Okay. Now, on the flip side of that, the absence of it ... okay ... doesn't tell me where a person is. It might raise a question. Now this is where the Corinthians passage comes in. My view ... the way Paul pastorally handled the Corinthians was this way. He encouraged them ... he identified them as carnal in 1st Corinthians. He encouraged them to walk faithfully in both letters. At the end, I think with some, he is so uncertain (and maybe the word frustrated is appropriate) that he makes the statement, "Test to see if you're in the faith."

What he is saying to them is this ... and again this is why I draw the line that I do pastorally which relates to your other question ... what he does ... he doesn't say to them, "Corinthians, or at least the ones I'm worried about, I don't think you're saved." What he does is he puts the onus on them. And he puts the onus on them by asking them to examine themselves before the Lord. And he leaves it at that. He doesn't make a definite statement as to their position with regard to being in or out. And that's how I would handle this kind of situation in the same kind of way. I can't know someone else's heart. And I don't want to be put in the position of telling them my great decreedal judgment about where they are. So what I'm going to try and do pastorally is to simply try and see if they relate themselves to Him and push them in that direction.

[At this point the taping once again stops on side 1 of tape 2 and restarts on the same side with the following]:

Moderator:

Please ... [apparently in response to Dr. Wilkin's offering to repeat the unrecorded question from the audience].

Dr. Wilkin:

I'm not sure I can completely repeat it [unrecorded question 18 from the audience], but the point is, when the nation of Israel is rejecting Jesus as the Christ, why don't the apostles stand up and say, "He really is the Christ. All you need to do is to believe in Him to get into the kingdom"? Something like that. "You don't need to bow to Him, you just need to believe in Him." Well, you see the issue there in the first place is not that they were going to believe if you suddenly said, "Well, you don't have to bow to Him." They'd say, "No, we don't have to bow to Him. We're going to crucify Him." You see, that wasn't the issue. They didn't believe He was the Christ. And if you don't believe Jesus is the Christ, you don't have eternal life. To the later question on why don't we have more pressing from Jesus or from the disciples? My feeling is, as you read for example in John chapter 12, He said He hardened their hearts so that they could not believe. You see, they kept rejecting, rejecting, rejecting, and so God finally hardened their hearts. And I also hold the view ... have you ever thought about why is it that Scripture doesn't come out and have 500 pages saying let's explain exactly that lordship salvation is wrong and the free grace position is right and give you hundreds of pages where it would be so clear, you can't miss it? Well, in the first place, it is so clear you can't miss it. But in the second place, the reason we don't have hundreds of pages is because God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And God has set up the Scriptures in such a way that it's possible to be confused. And you can teach just about anything you want from the Scriptures if you want to twist them and turn them. Now there are some very well-intentioned people who are twisting and turning the Scriptures. And I believe that the Lord is not trying to make it to where it is absolutely impossible to twist the Scriptures. He's making it possible that if a person wants to be deceived, they can. And the nation of Israel wanted to be deceived, and they were.

Questioner 18 from the Audience [apparently following up on unrecorded question 18]:

My question was about the term itself. It was a term that you are saying was widely universally misunderstood at that time in Israel. Why wasn't there an explanation given to those people who said, "We will not have him to rule over us" [apparently a reference to Luke 19:14]. You're saying that's a misconception. He is the Christ, but He doesn't need to rule. Why don't New Testament writers, when they use the term Lord or Christ, qualify it for believers then and now, "You understand when we say Lord and Christ, it doesn't imply that you need to bow the knee, or that He's Lord"?

Dr. Wilkin:

I guess my response would be to that question, look at John 11:25-27, where Martha says, "because you are the Christ, the Son of God." And what Jesus had just said is, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he will live. And he who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" And her response is, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the *Christos*," the Messiah.

He's the Anointed One. That's what the Anointed One is. And so I believe it is taught in Scripture. Now we don't have it on every page of Scripture, but it doesn't have to be.

Moderator:

Okay. Let's go on. Yes sir.

Questioner 19 from Audience:

I just wanted to ask ... which is the more powerful and glorious gospel: the gospel that says you freely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that necessarily results in change, or a gospel that says you freely believed in Jesus Christ but it would be possible that no change ever take place in that person's life?

Moderator:

Okay. He set forth two scenarios. Which gospel is more glorious? ... one that necessarily entails glorification or change. And one that ... how would you say it?

Questioner 19 from Audience:

... makes it possible that you could live your whole earthly life here ...

Moderator:

... okay ... makes it possible that there may be no change.

Dr. Wilkin:

Well, my answer would be, in the first place, if what you had in the gospel was a guarantee that God transforms a life to some level of holiness, my question would be, why not sinlessness? Why does God stop short of sinlessness? If He guarantees transformation in this life, wouldn't it bring more glory to God to make us the way we're going to be for all of eternity? Wouldn't it be a shining testimony? Secondly, I would say that we have ultimate sanctification. Some day we will be, and it's just a shadow of time or a quick blinking of an eye when people go through time of sin. In a scope of eternity, sin is going to be brief. And finally my response would be, one of the big problems with the lordship position, or even the soft lordship position, is that it undercuts the doctrine of rewards. Because, you see, the whole point is if we do not endure, we will not reign with Him. Only those who reign with Christ will rule with Christ. This life is a testing ground. So the reason God allows the possibility of failure is to determine who are going to be Christ's *metachoi*, who are going to be His partners for all eternity. And that is determined on whether we persevere or don't persevere. But you see the lordship position makes that whether we go to heaven or don't go to heaven. And that's the tragedy because you 1. destroy the gospel, and 2. you destroy rewards.

Questioner 19 from Audience:

If I could just put something real quick is ... maybe it's a misunderstanding on my part, but I don't see ... I cannot see ... how something as powerful as the gospel of Jesus Christ could be both believed and not result in any change in the person's life.

Dr. Wilkin:

I don't hold the view that a person could believe the gospel and live any length of time without any change. I don't say that. I would say that if a person lives any length of time, there will be some good works the person will do. But that's different than saying the person is onward and upward and that the person is in fellowship with God. A person may do some good things, see some changes in their life, and of course, we may not, as Dr. Ryrie says, even see any of those changes or recognize the changes. Dr. Ryrie, as you know, has the somewhere, somehow, sometime approach.

Moderator:

Do you want to comment on this ...?

Dr. Bock:

Ya. Just let me say this real briefly. I don't think we are helped by questions about our imagining what might glorify God more. And it's not to put down the question, but it's to make a statement. And that is that there are lots of possible worlds I can conceive of that I would think initially might be a better way for things to go than the way they seem to be going, and that is not what God has done. And so I would rather step back from that question, and say, rather than pretending to be able to make that judgment, which I don't think I can, the question that really needs to be asked ... or the questions that need to be asked need to be other kinds of questions.

Moderator:

Boy ... we're going to quit in 5 minutes. Let's go here. Yes sir. Ya please.

Questioner 20 from Audience:

Question for Dr. Wilkin. Just on the question about the faith that saves ... "we're saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is not alone" ... you said that was a false gospel. And you pointed out Ephesians 2:8-9 several times. I was just wondering what you thought about Ephesians 2:10, where it says, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"?

Moderator:

Let me just repeat the question. How is Ephesians 2:10 related to the gospel?

Dr. Wilkin:

Ya. I like Ephesians 2:10. It's part of the Scriptures. It says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." One of the questions was, what is the purpose of Him saving us? Well one of the purposes was that would produce good works "which God has prepared beforehand that we *should* walk in them." That we guaranteed will walk in them? No. We *should* walk in them. Is it possible for a believer to act like an unbeliever, to walk like mere men (*kata anthrōpon* – 1 Cor. 3:3)? Is it possible for a believer to live worse than an unbeliever? First Corinthians 5, where a man's living with his own stepmother. There are lots of things that are possible, but that's not what we're called to. We're called to holiness. We're called to fruit-bearing. And I think the point of the four soils is, the first soil rejects the gospel and is not saved. The second, third and fourth all believe and are all saved, but only the fourth is fruitful and bringing forth rewards ... is bringing forth fruit which will lead to reward. And the point is, all of us are called to be good soil, and it's not a guaranteed done deal. Because, you see, the ultimate result of that is, if you take that view, then if I start seeing problems in my life ... maybe I'm not saved. And if I start having doubts about the gospel ... maybe I'm not saved. And ultimately any one here could come to the point in their life where they came to the conclusion, "I guess I'm not saved because I don't have enough works ... I don't have enough this of that." R.T. Kendall said ... when he did his dissertation of Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 ... he said he was amazed when he studied the Puritan divines (the leaders of the Puritan branch of the Reformation, or the English branch) that almost to a man, as they were on their deathbeds, they were fearing they were going to hell, and they were lamenting they were going to hell, because they looked over their life and said, "I don't have the fruit of a true believer."

Moderator:

Do you want to add anything to that?

Dr. Bock:

No.

Moderator:

Okay. Yes sir.

Questioner 21 from the Audience:

Dr. Wilkin, you mentioned a couple of moments ago that the soft lordship and hard lordship view destroy the gospel and rewards. My question to you is, is the free grace gospel the exclusive gospel?

Moderator:

Okay. The question is, is the free grace gospel the exclusive gospel? That was pretty direct.

Dr. Wilkin:

Ya. I like that question. And the answer is, of course, yes, because there can only be one gospel. We can't have a combo gospel, as I argued at the beginning. If the free grace gospel is the gospel, it's the only one. If lordship salvation is the gospel (whatever flavor you have), then it's the only one, and I'm preaching a false gospel. That's the only conclusion you can come to.

Questioner 21 from the Audience:

So therefore any one who is not adhering to the free grace gospel, in your opinion, would fall under the anathema of Galatians 1?

Dr. Wilkin:

Yes. In terms of the anathema of Galatians 1, my view is, any one who is proclaiming a false gospel ... a person hypothetically could believe a false gospel and not proclaim it. But if they're proclaiming a false gospel, they fall under the curse, which I take it is the curse of God which falls upon the life of someone here and now. It's not like the NIV translates it, "let him be eternally condemned." That's not a translation; that's an interpretation. It simply says *anathema* -- let him be under the curse of God. And so I take it what that means is if I know someone that's proclaiming a false gospel, I don't send money into their ministry, I don't pray for God to bless their ministry. Instead I pray for God to bring them back to the true gospel.

Moderator:

The bell is about to ring. [Audience laughs]. The call is about to come, but he [Dr. Bock] has one last word he wants to ...

Dr. Bock:

Let me respond to the picture of what you call the combo gospel. If I preach a combo gospel, I would argue the Bible preaches a combo gospel too. There are several summary passages of response to gospel messages that use a variety of metaphors to make the point. And so as a result, faith is an adequate summary term for the gospel, repentance is an adequate summary term for the gospel, turning is an adequate summary term for the gospel. And I think when we boil that all down theologically, and we start talking systematic theologically, I still think we are talking about faith alone. But there are different ways and emphases in the faith movement of the heart that are emphasized by each one of those terms.

[Once again the tape stops at this point. It starts up again as follows:]

Dr. Wilkin:

[Apparently the beginning of this statement is omitted from the tape as it begins as follows:] ... and we need to stand on the Scriptures. We don't want to stand on the teachings of men. We don't want to say, "I believe this gospel because it's the most popular one," or "it's going to help me build the biggest church," or "it's the one that's had the most popularity in church history," or "it's the one my denomination teaches." We want to stand on the gospel because we've studied it for ourselves. And sadly, there are many people who have never studied the gospel beyond what the person who explained the gospel to them told them. We need to dig in and study the Scriptures for ourselves so we can answer these questions. And remember the Scripture says, "Let not many of you become teachers for as such

we'll incur a stricter judgment" [James 3:1]. And we also have the reference to Galatians 1:8-9, as was mentioned earlier. It's serious business to go out and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Make sure you're proclaiming the right one. Wouldn't it be terrible to go out and confuse thousands and thousands of people on the gospel? I'm saying if you study the Scriptures and you prayerfully say, "Lord Jesus, show me the truth. I'm open. I think this other position may be garbage, but if there's some truth in it, You show me," I'm convinced that you will come to the free grace position. I'm for the gospel. I'm against any distortions of the gospel because the sad thing is, when you have distortions of the gospel, even well-intentioned, those distortions of the gospel keep people from believing in Christ for eternal life, or make it more difficult for the person to cut through all the fog. You now it's the old, "mist in the pulpit is a fog in the pew." Well, lordship salvation is a dense fog in the pulpit, and you've got very little light getting to the pew. And you've got to hope that the lordship preacher is on a bad day, and he's preaching one of those simple invitations. And, by the way, that will be one final question for Dr. Bock, how do you decide when you're sharing the gospel which invitation you give? How do you know when to give the demand invitation, and how do you know when the simple invitation, and how do you teach people who are going out to pastor which invitation to give on a given Sunday?

Dr. Bock:

I thought we were making closing statements. Since I was asked the question, I can hardly refuse to answer it. The answer to it is actually quite simple. Usually the response and the kind of invitation you give is wrapped up in the kind of response you're getting from the person you're trying to share with. When you do personal evangelism, you're in a situation where you're able to interact with the person. You're able to sense what their needs and their nervousness is with regard to the gospel. And I think that is precisely the reason why the Scripture gives us a variety of avenues in to talk about faith. And I would hate to take any one of those avenues away from the arsenal that I have available to me as I go and share the gospel.

Moderator:

Okay. Let me speak for all of you in thanking Bob Wilkin for coming and for thanking Darrell Bock for speaking. He speaks on a wide variety of topics, and we appreciate your speaking as well. There's some material, if any of you are interested in the Grace Evangelical Society. If any of you are interested, you're welcome to it. We're dismissed.

[Applause from the audience].