

White Horse Inn

0:00:02 **Shane Rosenthal:** If you do a lot of bad throughout all your life and you then you die, do you have to pay for that? Do you believe in heaven and hell? Do you believe in karma, or is it lights out?

00:00:09 **Female:** I believe in karma. I think that if you're a bad person and you distinctly try to do bad, then it's going to kick you in the --

00:00:17 **Michael Horton:** That's something you hear on the street all the time. If you give them a selection and you mention karma, all the hands go up. You ask them, what's your background? Well, I'm a Baptist or I'm Catholic. It doesn't really matter, we're all Hindus now as *Newsweek* magazine says.

00:00:36 **Narrator:** Five centuries ago in taverns and public houses across Europe, the masses would gather for discussion and debate over the latest ideas sweeping the land. From one such meeting place, a small Cambridge inn called the White Horse, the Reformation came to the English speaking world. Carrying on the tradition, welcome to the *White Horse Inn*.

00:01:01 **Michael Horton:** Hello and welcome to another edition of the *White Horse Inn*. A central teaching of Buddhism, Hinduism and other Indian-based religions, the idea of karma is fundamental to all religions really. In fact, it's basic to the way we think about everyday life. "What comes around goes around..." "You reap what you sow." "You get what's coming to you." In the east it's called the cycle of Samsara. In the West, it's just the way the world works. Grace is radically different. It's the lucky break you might say, something that you can't predict and you'd never expect. You can't manage it, control it or make it happen. It's something that surprises precisely because it's contrary to the logic of iron-clad laws. "Luck" is the bucket in which we place the stuff we can't explain in terms of rational order. It's beyond your control.

Religion is often the crack of control addicts. With its two hands of spirituality and morality, bad religion feeds our instinct for management of our lives and the lives of others. If you follow the right principles, rules, rituals and programs, you can eliminate a lot of unpredictability. Do X, and Y happens. It can be done in a threatening key, do this and you shall live, transgress it and you shall surely die, or we could water it down into a smiling, easy listening law as in the subtitle of televangelist Joel Osteen's bestseller, *Become a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life Every Day*. His principles make sense. They're like karma. Give to get. What goes around comes around. But if you fail, the worst that happens is you fail to have your best life now.

Order is grounded in universal laws. They're timeless and inflexible like the law of gravity. There is such a thing as karma. God's moral justice is inflexible. We don't really break God's laws, rather like the full hearty attempt to defy gravity, we break ourselves and each other against them. But redemption is grounded in particular events in history. History just happens. It's not like eternal and inexorable laws. Sometimes things happen that defy these iron-clad natural principles. And the gospel is in that category. It's a surprise. We're not in control. It's not what we would expect and instead of getting what we deserve or

White Horse Inn

expect, we get the very opposite, but God who is rich in mercy, that's what we get. And that surprise is what we want to talk about in this edition of the *White Horse Inn* as we talk about "The Great Exchange." To discuss this, we have your usual hosts, Kim Riddlebarger, Rod Rosenblatt, Justin Holcomb and I'm Mike Horton. We're glad to be with you. First of all, I want us to listen to an on the street interview that our producer, Shane Rosenthal recorded on a secular university campus.

00:04:01 **Shane Rosenthal:** I'm asking people today what they think about ultimate justice. Do you believe for example that when you die, people who do really bad stuff get what they deserve or is it just lights out? What's your take?

00:04:11 **Female:** I'm not really sure I would like to think that there is some sort of punishment if someone lived their whole entire life as being bad, but I've never really thought about that.

00:04:22 **Shane Rosenthal:** If you do a lot of bad throughout all your life and then you die, do you have to pay for that? Do you believe in heaven and hell? Do you believe in karma, or is it lights out?

00:04:30 **Male:** Well, I was raised Catholic so I would say that there is a heaven and a hell. Yeah, I would say there is an ultimate justice for all the bad deeds that you do throughout your life. And given my Christian background, I would say that if you do repent and actually mean it, like just not say it, then yeah you'd be forgiven.

00:04:48 **Shane Rosenthal:** Just that one final prayer, is that enough or do you have to do certain things to atone for your sins?

00:04:54 **Male:** I think some form of atonement would be better. Man, that's a good question. I haven't really thought about that before. But yeah, I would say atonement would be better than just one prayer, like maybe community service or punishment.

00:05:07 **Michael Horton:** Isn't it interesting how modern theories of jurisprudence influence people's ideas more than the biblical text? So I think community service. I don't think that people should go to jail necessarily, but maybe community service. Maybe we should pick up stuff on the roadside in order to pay for the sins that we've committed.

00:05:31 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Well, the false premise here -- and we certainly understand why a person could hold this in this culture and especially in this climate of Christianity. The false premise is that my community service will make up for my sins. There is no sense that my sinful acts offend a holy God. That isn't even on the radar.

00:05:48 **Michael Horton:** Yeah, you think of David's confession in Psalm 51 against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are just when you arraign me in your courtroom. In sin, my mother conceived me. I mean this goes down so deep in his soul because he recognizes the vertical relationship of this sin. Isn't that a big issue in our culture? Sin today is basically a mistake, something that you do that hurts

White Horse Inn

another person's feelings or does something wrong in relation to another person, but what David is saying is even though my sins have been against Bathsheba, adultery, against her husband, basically sending him into battle for the purpose of having him killed... against you have I said -- that's what moves it from the category of made a mistake to the category of I have transgressed the law of a holy God.

00:06:53 **Kim Riddlebarger:** One of the things we're up against that relates to that is the great no-no that the one prohibition that almost everyone in this culture has now is we cannot be exclusive. So the great sin is to say, I'm right and you're wrong. We're automatically up against the culture when we say that there is a holy God and your sin is against him because the culture doesn't have that category. We have to do a lot of work to get that even across to people. The second thing is that the positive ethic today is, you can do whatever you want so long as you don't hurt anybody else. So there is no even frame of reference to consider that what I do might actually offend a holy God. It isn't even --

00:07:34 **Michael Horton:** That is intrinsically heinous.

00:07:37 **Kim Riddlebarger:** It's gone. It's just lost.

00:07:38 **Michael Horton:** This is not just our culture. You go back to the 2nd century church father Origen and he says that everything and everyone including Lucifer will be reconciled to God in the end because God has no wrath, and therefore, all of his punishments are purely educative and remedial. So it's basically moral reform and you have to go through this process of moral education, basically going to traffic school. And what's interesting to me is people will get rid of the idea of divine wrath as not very nice and yet embrace an idea of who knows how many centuries of suffering in purgatory before you can finally make it. And what we're saying is you do not go to traffic school. You can't pay this bill, but it's been paid for you.

00:08:43 **Rod Rosenblatt:** In many ways, Origen's picture is trivial.

00:08:48 **Michael Horton:** Trivialize sin and God. That's the thing folks, it's not that Christians who take these doctrines seriously like justification and original sin, and it's not that Christians who take these doctrines seriously have a low view of God's law and God's justice. It's the very opposite. People who think that this is a light offense that they can somehow pay off really do not know who God is, what his holiness is and how serious God's justice is. Here's another interesting comment on the street.

00:09:24 **Shane Rosenthal:** People who do really bad stuff and then they die, is it lights out or is there ultimate justice?

00:09:28 **Female:** I don't really know what to say.

00:09:29 **Shane Rosenthal:** Heaven and hell, karma, anything?

00:09:32 **Female:** Yeah, I believe in karma.

White Horse Inn

00:09:34 **Michael Horton:** That's something you hear on the street all the time. If you give them a selection and you mention karma, all the hands go up. You ask them, what's your background? Well, I'm a Baptist, or I'm Catholic. It doesn't really matter, we're all Hindus now as *Newsweek* magazine says. If you put out enough good karma, then in your next rebirth, your next incarnation, you come back at a higher level of being.

00:09:59 **Rod Rosenblatt:** One thing that the Westerner needs to know is that in the East, it's not a blessing. The goal is to escape the cycle. It's something that you need to conquer or escape or get over or get past.

00:10:13 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Of course the fear is that you'll come back as a cockroach or something. It depends on how nice you were to folks.

00:10:20 **Michael Horton:** The whole idea of reaping what you sow, if you do good to others you'll get it back, if you lead a clean life you won't get venereal disease and so forth. These are all things that we can say yes to, right? Structurally...

00:10:34 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Of course. That's kind of a reciprocity principle. You're going to reap what you sow. That clearly is evident just in daily life, but as Rod points out, karma is an eastern thing that's much different than that. It's much more of a comprehensive system that argues that if we participate in this cyclical pattern of life that just goes on and on and you happen to pop out at one point in this form and you'll pop out at another point in another form, and the goal is eventually to escape to where you reach enough purity that you're not subject to these limitations anymore. So when someone says they believe in karma, my first question is what do you mean by karma?

00:11:08 **Michael Horton:** What I find really interesting is the way the Apostle Paul talks about the elementary principles of the world. These basic laws are there and so you can pick up for example a book on physical laws and a book on moral laws and say, yeah, that makes sense. That's the way the world works. You can even glean things from Joel Osteen, common sense things about how you can be a better you and say, oh yeah, that's true.

00:11:39 **Kim Riddlebarger:** For civic righteousness...

00:11:40 **Michael Horton:** Yeah, or a diet program.

00:11:42 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Paul's argument, if you obey Caesar and you don't make faces at the governor during a parade, your chances of being arrested are lower and life is going to be a little better, you know?

00:11:48 **Michael Horton:** Yeah. But that is in the category of law, not gospel.

00:11:55 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Well, Paul goes so as far as identify the law as part of the basic principles of this world. It will pass away.

White Horse Inn

00:12:02 **Justin Holcomb:** Even in karma, there's a thing called dharma which is the impersonal -- see, it's already different from Christianity. We have a personal God who gives his law which is an expression of his character and nature versus this impersonal blob of unity of all things, but there's this cosmic impersonal law that's just kind of the way the world works. Many people like karma because they want to avoid the idea of the wrath of God and they think the wrath of God is a downer or negative. Like we talked just in the last episode, the good news about the wrath of God is that there's no more purgatory, there's no more payment of sins because it's all been taken care of because of the mercy of God. But people who want to avoid the wrath of God move toward karma because it seems like a nicer version, be good and good things happen to you. But what they don't get is the cruelty of karma. The cruelty is going back to the whole point you all are making about it's eastern. Well, especially in a caste system, you're in your caste system in India, in Hinduism because of karma, because of your previous life. And this is what happens, the logic of karma says this, if you see someone suffering, they're supposed to be suffering. That's karma. Helping them is actually going against the laws of the universe. That's the law of the universe playing out because they deserve it and let it do its work. So it actually undermines kindness and love toward those who are suffering, so there's an underbelly of cruelty to karma that many people aren't aware of.

00:13:38 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Really, really good point.

00:13:40 **Michael Horton:** A very good point... But let's look at it within Judeo-Christian civilization. For example, the idea in Roman Catholicism that purgatory is where this wheel of karma is going to come full circle. It's not reincarnation, but it's the same problem that is trying to be addressed by something remedial, right? We're going to pay off our temporal debts for who knows how long depending on how bad you were in this life. And that all participates in this notion of it's not going to be hell, but it's going to be something where you can make up for what you've done in this life.

00:14:26 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Yes. And intuitively, that sounds correct.

00:14:30 **Michael Horton:** Whether they hear it from Hindus or they hear it from Joel Osteen or they hear it from the Vatican.

00:14:37 **Rod Rosenblatt:** I think it's interesting that there's one book of Proverbs in the whole Bible.

00:14:42 **Michael Horton:** Well, and it's interesting when you say that. The Book of Proverbs makes perfect sense. I went through it with my family in our devotions and they were wonderful teaching opportunities. And you know what? It made perfect sense. But if I go through the Gospel of John or I go through Romans, we have to camp out for an hour on one point because it's confusing. It's not common sense at all.

00:15:09 **Kim Riddlebarger:** It's revealed by God in a particular historical situation, yeah.

White Horse Inn

00:15:12 **Michael Horton:** Kim, you mentioned just a moment ago the way that Paul refers to these elementary principles of the world. What's not striking is that Paul affirms these elementary principles. Look, the Pagans have these elementary principles that things work like this if you do this, you have that, yin and yang, you do good and it comes back to you. That's true and it's not surprising because in Romans 1 and 2, Paul says that the law is written on the conscience. Everybody by nature knows the law. What's surprising is that in Galatians and in Colossians, Paul equates these Pagan understandings of natural law with the divinely revealed Torah of the old covenant.

00:16:01 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah. That's a shocking statement.

00:16:03 **Michael Horton:** They observed years and days and cycles of seasons and they have these superstitions, these ways of placating the gods. They recognized that there is a kind of reward system built into the universe, but what they failed to realize is that now in the fullness of time, God has sent his son and this isn't anything that you could have discerned from the way the world works.

00:16:33 **Kim Riddlebarger:** The thing that makes karma tough that chips away at it from a Christian perspective is the idea that the world is fallen. This is not the natural cycle of life that we hear from folks in the East, that there's one big force or oneness and everything is participating in it. So the way the Western person speaks of death now is passing away, that we kind of go back to that oneness again and it's doled out again at another time. All of that misses the fact that the reason why reciprocity principles work the way they do so inefficiently and so unfairly is because the world is fallen. That's not the only thing that you're supposed to be, that's because things are screwed up.

00:17:13 **Justin Holcomb:** There's a really good example of this in Buddhism of elementary principles, but then how it gets turned into a lot more because Buddhism also has a stance on karma and so maybe like a minute on Buddhism, there's four noble truths in Buddhism and it hits on the whole idea of suffering and the fall. The first one is that existence is suffering, that things are messed up. There's death. The second one is that the cause of suffering is our craving and desire for pleasures of the senses. That sounds pretty close to the reality, that sounds true. Three, we can be free of suffering if we give up and get rid of ourselves. Now, this is where Buddhism really kind of goes off the rails, we have to extinguish all of our cravings and realize that we're really nothing. And then fourth is you have to follow an eightfold path. There's a way to get out of suffering. I mean this is the blending of karma with pop life coach theology. Here are the eightfold paths, ready? Right views, right resolve, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort and right contemplation. That's what you have to do. You have to do yoga, the work of purging your cravings and desires. You must work and do these eightfold right things.

00:18:32 **Michael Horton:** Isn't that amazing how you could hear almost the same thing in a gazillion churches across America next Sunday?

00:18:41 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Right on.

White Horse Inn

00:18:42 **Michael Horton:** Why is it that we flee to this stuff? Attracted like a moth to a flame and will not hear of the cross and the good news of forgiveness of sins...

00:18:54 **Justin Holcomb:** It's the scandal of -- you said the surprise, the mystery. The shorthand I use is grace is the opposite of karma. Karma is the default mode. It's the Palladian default mode that we have and grace is a different kind of logic. It's almost like a paradigm shift. You have to get used to, wait a second, I get something that I don't deserve. Even my children, when I give them something they know they don't deserve, it's different from the way of the world, it's different from all reality. It's an in-breaking and it turns the world upside down. It's not how things usually work.

00:19:27 **Michael Horton:** Yeah. In fact, Justin, there's this great interview that I read years ago between Michka Assayas and Bono from U2. This is part of that interview, Michka Assayas not being a Christian at all, Bono says, "There's nothing hippie about my picture of Christ. The gospel has painted a picture of a very demanding, sometimes divisive love, but love it is. I accept the Old Testament as more of an action movie, blood, car chases, evacuations, a lot of special effects, sea dividing, mass murder, adultery, the children of God are running amok wayward. Maybe that's why they are so relatable..." Assayas says, "I think I'm beginning to understand religion because I've started acting and thinking like a father. What do you make of that?" Bono says, "Yes, I think that's normal. It's a mind-blowing concept that the God who created the universe might be looking for company, a real relationship with people, but the thing that keeps me on my knees is the difference between karma and grace." Assayas says, "I haven't heard you talk about that." Bono says, "Well you see at the center of all religions is the idea of karma. You know, what you put out comes back to you, an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth or in physics, in physical laws, every action is met by an equal or opposite reaction. It's clear to me that karma is at the very heart of the universe. I'm absolutely sure of it and yet, along comes this idea called grace to upend all that as you reap so you sow stuff. Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed because I've done a lot of stupid stuff. I'd be in big trouble if karma was going to finally be my judge."

00:21:10 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Wow! Good for him.

00:21:12 **Michael Horton:** Isn't that just an amazing insight into exactly what we're talking about here. It's not that the law is wrong. Paul says that over and over again. You guys are misunderstanding me. I'm not saying that the law is bad, or that the law is wrong. This is the way God set it up in creation. And had there been no fall, we would all be law keepers. This is the way we were wired. But what happens after transgression, after everything is broken, does God walk away from it? He could. There's nothing in the laws of nature or moral laws that say otherwise, but the very fact that he did something else is something strange and surprising that's going to have to be announced to us by special revelation, and that's why we have the scriptures. This is not any belittling at all of Judaism. Jewish scholars like John Levinson would have pointed this out themselves that Judaism as a world religion today is not the religion of the Old Testament. It's not a continuation of that religion, because the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and after that, as

White Horse Inn

Levinson explains, each man's own table becomes the altar of sacrifice and his own repentance replaces the sacrifices in the temple. Well, what this means is the whole principle of substitution, the animal being substituted for you and your guilt, taking it away is now your repentance. You are making up. You are sacrificing for your repentance to make up for your sins, so put Judaism too today in that category of Hinduism, Buddhism and moralistic, therapeutic forms of Christianity. Everything is on that side and then there's this one announcement, Jesus Christ has become for us the righteousness of God. That marvelous exchange is really what separates Christianity from everything else.

00:23:20 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Absolutely!

00:23:21 **Michael Horton:** Let's listen to some of the other on the street interviews that Shane conducted.

00:23:26 **Female:** Whenever I think about heaven and hell, it's completely my own thing so I usually don't talk about it. As far as karma goes, I think to a certain degree it works, but at the same time, good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people.

00:23:39 **Shane Rosenthal:** How about the person who most of his life does a lot of good, but does some bad, but then is sorry for it. Is there such thing as atonement?

00:23:46 **Female:** I think it exists, even if that feeling sorry for what they've done is just for themselves, so I think that's a very healthy way of experiencing life because people do bad things and they're not necessarily bad people for doing those things, they're just human, so there is a human reaction to it as well.

00:24:01 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Stunning.

00:24:02 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Very sad, and yet typical because the categories, the classical Christian categories are now completely absent from this culture.

00:24:10 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Right. It used to be that atheists in prior centuries, atheists understood what the Christian claim was.

00:24:18 **Kim Riddlebarger:** And rejected it.

00:24:19 **Rod Rosenblatt:** They rejected it, but at least they knew what it was. We've got a generation that's never even heard it.

00:24:24 **Michael Horton:** People don't realize how easy it is, it's our default setting because God wired us for law. That is our default setting and how we're going to do in a Christian way with bible verses that are there in the text precisely what a Hindu or a Buddhist or one of these people on the street would do when asked, is there a kind of yin and yang out there? Is there a kind of you get what's coming to you? Do good and it will come back to you. Everyone nods at that. Everyone says, yeah, sure. And I just read a good book on that, *How You Can Become a Better You*.

White Horse Inn

00:25:11 **Kim Riddlebarger:** And your Christian bookstore is filled with them.

00:25:12 **Michael Horton:** Yeah, but is there anything that has been done for my salvation?

00:25:16 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Right.

00:25:17 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Well, the question really is why do I need salvation in the first place if this is the way things are.

00:25:22 **Michael Horton:** I need good advice, not this.

00:25:23 **Kim Riddlebarger:** I need good advice. From what do I need to be saved because I haven't really done anything wrong. I've made mistakes. I've done some things that I can atone for, but I've not really done anything. I'm basically a good person. The other thing that just jumps out from that answer is belief is personal. Anything you believe is walled off from any critical evaluation because this is my personal belief you can't get out of. You have no right to judge, you have no right to really ask me about it. I think you could deduce from this that what you believe in personally is ultimately what's true and therefore that's why you think you can die without any need to consider, anything other than your own personal opinion.

00:26:01 **Michael Horton:** Again, isn't it striking that -- and I'm not judging them, this is my heart too, apart from someone bringing the good news to me. We will say, no, you're going to have to suffer. Not a lot because whatever you do, it's not big enough for you to suffer like forever, so hell is gone. But you will have to suffer some. What we're saying is no, you should suffer in hell forever, but you're not going to suffer at all for your sins because of Jesus Christ if you put your trust in him.

00:26:35 **Kim Riddlebarger:** He suffered for you and in your place.

00:26:37 **Michael Horton:** Yeah.

00:26:38 **Justin Holcomb:** That's the scandal because the message of grace seems to undo justice. That's what people are picking up on because it sounds like the people who say a full orb high octane gospel message straight from the Bible, it sounds like you're getting off the hook and that's just not right because they have in the fiber of their being some sense of justice to put there. But we're not saying that justice is done, we're saying that justice is satisfied. That's 1 John. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us." He is just. He would be unjust not to forgive us because the payment and the curse and everything has been done, so justice is actually satisfied not being done away with Christ.

00:27:22 **Kim Riddlebarger:** And Justin, it's a great point. The only reason we know that is because God has told us that in Scripture. I mean, go back to Plato's question. What I need to go any further is a waft of revelation from the gods...

White Horse Inn

00:27:35 **Rod Rosenblatt:** To sail across the sea and out.

00:27:36 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah because in natural revelation karma is as good as you're going to get. It's kind of vague, gee if I've done something wrong, I've got to make it right. I'm not really sure how to do that. I can either do good works or self-punishment of some sort or abstain from something for a while, but what we don't have is the creator of the universe speaking to us and telling us about who he is, about what we've done against him and what he's done to save us. We don't have that voice contributing anything to this discussion. There is no appeal to scripture.

00:28:08 **Michael Horton:** Yeah. What Paul says in Romans is that the gospel is the answer to the question, how is it that God can be 100 percent just and "let us off the hook"?

00:28:24 **Rod Rosenblatt:** What you quoted earlier from the third chapter of Romans, he's just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.

00:28:31 **Justin Holcomb:** What we're noticing in some of these comments that we've been listening to, what we've picked up on is that there doesn't seem to be a need for salvation in dealing with the holiness of God. How could sinners be in heaven? And this works out in Islam because their picture of the human condition isn't that we're sinful, it's that we're ignorant and forgetful that we have forgotten information, we're ignorant. So what do we need? We need a revelation of God's will so we can do it. So the Koran is simply an advice book on the will of God and you can do it because you forgot. It's not because you're dead in your sins or your every dimension of the human capacity is tainted by sin. That's a very different message. We don't say that we're simply forgetful and we just need to -- Jesus didn't show up like a prophet to tell us what to do to get to heaven, he came doing something else. Our problem is way deeper than ignorance and forgetful.

00:29:29 **Michael Horton:** And don't you see that with the Jesus confrontation with the rich young ruler. He comes and he says, what is the one thing that I need to do to be saved and Jesus says, well, it was already revealed to you, right? Here are the Ten Commandments and he says, well, I've done all that since my youth. And Jesus is saying, do you really think that you've done all that? You say, Justin that for Islam, sin is forgetfulness. That reminds me too of Plato and you know basically our whole civilization is based on the idea that if we just had more education, then they'll become good people. And yet here in America where we have universal education, we incarcerate a higher percentage of our population than any other nation on earth. Let's listen to some more of the responses.

00:30:23 **Shane Rosenthal:** Do you believe like when you die, there is karma, heaven and hell or is it just lights out?

00:30:30 **Female:** Probably closer to lights out.

00:30:33 **Shane Rosenthal:** If there is nothing beyond, then good is subjective, isn't it? Not getting caught is the ultimate good, wouldn't it be?

White Horse Inn

00:30:41 **Female:** I think good is whatever you're trained in society to be and I think it's different for every society because I mean we've got cannibals who think it's fine to eat people.

00:30:50 **Shane Rosenthal:** So the view of right and wrong evolves overtime, but there's no gold standard for it?

00:30:54 **Female:** Pretty much. I think it's what survival of the species means.

00:30:58 **Michael Horton:** I'm not sure I want to live in a world where a vast number of the population believes that it's okay to eat other people.

00:31:08 **Rod Rosenblatt:** I'm afraid I have bad news for you. We're rapidly going to approach that.

00:31:13 **Michael Horton:** I mean did she not say that there are some societies where it's okay to eat cannibals, it's basically --

00:31:21 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Cannibals eat other people.

00:31:23 **Michael Horton:** Sorry, for cannibals to eat other people.

00:31:24 **Kim Riddlebarger:** It's like Augustine's line, "A thief can justify his own theft, but can't stand being stolen from." A cannibal can justify eating somebody else, but can't stand the thought of him being eaten.

00:31:34 **Michael Horton:** Well, you can beat this to a horse as an example, but it certainly works. People eating each other is in the same category of what Hitler did in Nazi Germany. So essentially are you saying that because morality is culturally relative, what happened in Nazi Germany was actually okay?

00:31:54 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Well, Shane I think really nails this by asking these questions of people who probably never thought about any of this before.

00:32:00 **Michael Horton:** And she did say, you know I haven't thought about it.

00:32:04 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah. So this is what comes to mind kind of intuitively based on the things they've been exposed to in the culture. So this tells us as much about the culture and the world they live in as it does about the answers they're giving.

00:32:15 **Michael Horton:** And it tells us, we're all being catechized when people shove doctrine down people's throats. Doctrine is being drummed into us all day long.

00:32:27 **Kim Riddlebarger:** It just happens to be false doctrine.

White Horse Inn

00:32:29 **Michael Horton:** Right. We've got to go back to Hitler. His intentions were -- I mean he wasn't intending to do something evil, he was intending to do something that he really believed was a righteous cause.

00:32:40 **Michael Horton:** A master race was important for the preservation of the world in his estimation.

00:32:43 **Michael Horton:** The survival of the fittest.

00:32:44 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah Ubermensch, Nietzsche's Superman.

00:32:47 **Justin Holcomb:** She brings up this category of intentions which is actually really helpful. One reason is because Christ does that on the Sermon on the Mount. He's like just -- you've heard it say don't do this, but if you do it in your heart -- he's actually getting to the category of intention and desire. And this is actually really helpful when I've had conversations with people, when they start talking kind of like this about reward and karma and they bring it, the intention thing and if you just kind of push a little bit more and go, don't you have some really, really bad desires? Doesn't the category of intention actually make the whole karma morality thing even more dangerous? And so when someone brings the category of intention into the conversation, that's where we can actually have some really fruitful conversations.

00:33:30 **Michael Horton:** Yeah, absolutely. Let's listen to another clip.

00:33:33 **Shane Rosenthal:** When you die, is there a heaven and hell, is there karma or is it lights out? What's your take?

00:33:38 **Male:** Well, I do believe in God, I do believe that there's a higher power. That's my personal belief, but I believe we're measured by the way we affect other people and ultimate justice is just doing good and if at the end of your life and the good you've done outweighs the bad and I believe you'll go to heaven or wherever it is that you believe in.

00:33:59 **Shane Rosenthal:** Is it 51-49, is it 60-40, 80-20? What's your take on that? How much good you have to do compared to the bad?

00:34:07 **Male:** Perhaps 51-49. It mostly just comes down to the intentions in your heart.

00:34:13 **Female:** I believe in karma. I think that if you're a bad person and you distinctly try to do bad, then it's going to kick you in the -- and I've always thought that people who distinctly try to do good, even if it's not rewarded in their life, then they will be rewarded in whatever they believe in, whether it's spirituality, whether it's karma, whether it's God. And I think that as long as you try to be a good person, then I think you're set.

00:34:38 **Shane Rosenthal:** What's the cutoff? Like is it 50-50, 60-40, 80-20?

00:34:42 **Female:** I think it all has to do with intention.

White Horse Inn

00:34:44 **Male:** I believe in karma. I don't think I would create a hell.

00:34:49 **Shane Rosenthal:** So how does the average person deal with those bad parts of themselves when they meet their maker?

00:34:57 **Male:** Tough question there. You got to redeem yourself. You got to straighten up yourself.

00:35:04 **Kim Riddlebarger:** You've got to redeem yourself. Wow!

00:35:06 **Michael Horton:** We're hearing the same message across the board. It's interesting that no matter how people change the rules and become moral relativists, everybody deep down, thinks that you really do have to save yourself. You do have to redeem yourself.

00:35:22 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Yeah. Almost every one of these interviews, and I think if you made a hundred more, they'd have the same common theme.

00:35:28 **Michael Horton:** I'm not surprised that Lisa Miller wrote that *Newsweek* article several years ago, "We're All Hindus Now."

00:35:34 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Yes.

00:35:35 **Justin Holcomb:** What we're seeing is Machen's quote that everything is in the imperative mood also. My to-do list is growing the more I listen to these. And there's no declaration, there's no indicative. Everything is in the imperative. You've picked up on it and it's helpful for me to hear because hearing you guys talk about it, it's heartbreaking. It builds compassion for the fact that they are being catechized like this and it kind of just gives me a sense of resolve as a minister of how much we need to keep on saying the bull's eye of our faith because no one else is saying it.

00:36:08 **Michael Horton:** Yeah. Isn't it one question we should ask ourselves as ministers everyday, how likely are you to make announcements versus any other form of speech act in a given week? Are you announcing good news? Everything that we're hearing here is not -- there is no announcement. They're just reminding us of what we already know deep down, namely that God expects us to pull it off. I am the one who has to pacify God.

00:36:41 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Well, and the answer that not only belief personal, but God wouldn't do that. When somebody says God wouldn't do that, they're in effect saying, well, if I were God, I'd do it a different way than God did.

00:36:51 **Michael Horton:** Right. And how exactly would you know that? One more clip.

White Horse Inn

00:36:56 **Female:** I think as long as everyone kind of does bad stuff, no one's perfect. So I think as long as the ultimate theme of your life was to be a good person when no one is looking, then to me that's being a good person, but everyone does bad things here and there throughout their life.

00:37:12 **Shane Rosenthal:** Do you think it's a matter of the good outweighing the bad?

00:37:13 **Female:** Yeah, exactly, outweighing it by a lot, not just like 50-50 or like 60-40, like outweighing it by a lot.

00:37:22 **Michael Horton:** You know, basically we have the same theology as the medieval Roman Catholic Church.

00:37:27 **Rod Rosenblatt:** That's what it sounds like.

00:37:29 **Michael Horton:** But the difference is the optimism. Whereas Martin Luther was terrified because he was sure his good would not outweigh his bad. In our culture, there's nobody who thinks that their bad will outweigh their good.

00:37:44 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Well, the absence of things is what scare me. Any of the basic Christian categories that used to be present, they're just gone.

00:37:52 **Michael Horton:** Well folks, you know, people get what's coming to them. We all believe that deep down and it's not wrong. That is the way God created the world. But the gospel is not a repetition or a lesson reminding us about the way the world goes. It is a surprising announcement about what God did anyway when we failed. It's good news. And I mean it's not rational. I don't mean that the Christian faith including the gospel can't be explained or defended in rational terms, what I'm saying is that the message itself doesn't make sense to our moral imagination. As the Apostle Paul said, it's foolishness to Greeks. It just doesn't mesh with our sense of getting what you deserve even if we lower the bar when it comes to what we think we deserve.

This is the gospel. The gospel is not, you can become a better you and here are our eight principles. The gospel is that our sins have been transferred to Christ. Our debts belong to him and he has transferred his righteousness, his riches to us. And here are some statements from the early church. We've gone through the New Testament. We'll be going through the Old Testament in the next program, but some great summaries of this great exchange from the early church. This one is from First Epistle of Clement written in the late 1st century. "God promised that your seed shall be as the stars of heaven, Genesis 15:5. All therefore were glorified and magnified not through themselves or their works or the righteous actions that they did, but through his will. And so we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works that we have done in holiness of heart, but through faith, by which the almighty God has justified all who have existed from the beginning to whom be the glory forever and ever."

White Horse Inn

00:40:02 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Interesting that within a generation probably of Paul's letter to the church in Rome, Barnabas gets it -- or Clement gets it rather.

00:40:10 **Michael Horton:** Yeah and Barnabas also in the late 1st century, "Furthermore concerning the Sabbath that is also written in the 10 words," the Ten Commandments "that he spoke to Moses face-to-face on Mt. Sinai and sanctify the Lord's Sabbath with clean hands and a clean heart." Well now, what would you do with that in the 1st century? I know what is done in churches across America on an average Sunday, but in the late 1st century, here's what Barnabas says, "If therefore anyone now is able by being clean of heart to sanctify the day that God sanctified, we have been deceived in every respect. But if that is not the case, accordingly then we will truly rest and sanctify it only when we ourselves will be able to do so after being justified and receiving the promise, then we will be able to sanctify it because we ourselves will have been sanctified first." And then the Epistle that I read in the first program, the Epistle to Diognetus written between the mid-1st to the mid-2nd century, "So then having already planned everything in his mind together with his son, he took upon himself our sins. He himself gave up his own son as a ransom for us, the holy one for the lawless, the guiltless for the guilty, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else but his righteousness could have covered our sins? In whom was it possible for us, the lawless and ungodly to be justified, except in the Son of God alone? O sweet exchange, o the incomprehensible work of God, o the unexpected blessings that the sinfulness of many should be hidden in one righteous person while the righteousness of one should justify many sinners, having demonstrated therefore in the former time the powerlessness of our nature to obtain life. And having now revealed the savior's power to save even the powerless, he willed that for both these reasons we should believe in his goodness and regard him as nurse, father, teacher, counselor, healer, mind, light, honor, glory, strength and life and not be anxious about food or clothing."

00:42:31 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah, it's an amazing quote.

00:42:32 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Yeah. I'm glad to see some of those because in general, in running into the writings of the fathers, the contrast between the apostolic writings and even some of the earliest, I would say in general, the whole thing has been lost. This remind me it hadn't yet been lost.

00:42:50 **Michael Horton:** Right. And it's also even later you find statements like this, the problem is on the next page, you could have it taken away with the other hand.

00:42:59 **Kim Riddlebarger:** Yeah. I'm always amazed when my Roman Catholic friends will say, you know, the New Testament is an obscure book, but the church fathers, them, I get.

00:43:07 **Rod Rosenblatt:** Goodness!

00:43:08 **Michael Horton:** Right. Now, the New Testament is the clearest and no small thing, the normative canon for what the gospel is. The good news is not that we are getting

White Horse Inn

what we deserve, or that we did enough to clear the bar for karma to come back in our favor. The good news is that Jesus Christ's blood and righteousness had become our glorious dress and that now because of that, because Jesus is our righteousness, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in him. That's the best news we could possibly tell the world and you know what, folks, it's the best news you could hear right now and we have to hear this over and over again because what you're hearing on the street and what we've been talking about around this table is exactly the explanation of the problem that you will hear every day unless the gospel challenges it. We'll look forward to being with you again next time on the *White Horse Inn*. Thanks for listening.

00:44:14 **Narrator:** The *White Horse Inn* is a listener supported broadcast. For more information about this program, visit us online at whitehorseinn.org. If you sign up as an innkeeper, architect or reformer, not only will you get a complimentary subscription to our magazine *Modern Reformation*, but you'll also get longer editions of every *White Horse Inn* broadcast. To find out how to join one of these support programs, click on the support tab of our website, whitehorseinn.org. You can also give us a call at 1-800-890-7556. That's 1-800-890-7556. We'll see you next time at the *White Horse Inn*.