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SERIES: WE ARE FREE (A Study of Galatians)

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TITLE: An Interview with J. Warner Wallace: “Cold Case Christianity” (Pt. 2 of 2)

Today, Pastor Nat continues his interview with homicide detective and Christian apologist, J. Warner Wallace. They’ll be talking about how Wallace’s investigative techniques have helped him reveal the truth and reliability of the Scriptures.

NC: Well Jim, it's great to have you back on the show today. You wrote this book called *God's Crime Scene: A Cold-Case Detective Examines the Evidence for a Divinely Created Universe*.

And I remember when I first saw this, I'm like, “What the heck is this about - God's crime scene? What did God do? Who did He kill?” But that's not at all what the book is about. So, will you share with us a little bit about this book, and why you wrote it?

JWW: So you get to a death scene - there's four ways to die. You die by natural causes, accidental, suicide, or homicide. Trying to figure out how this person died is the key to determining whether this death scene is a crime scene. And we ask a simple question. It can all come down to this: If I can explain everything that's in the room with the victim - by staying in the room for an explanation - it's not a murder.

So if there's a pistol in the room, and he's got a single gunshot wound, but the pistol is his pistol. And there's no sign that anyone's coming in from outside the room. And he's by himself. And the gunshot injury is such that he could self-inflict that injury. Well, I've explained everything by staying inside the room for a causal explanation. Him - he's the cause of the injury. And that's going to be ruled a suicide rather than a homicide. But the minute I have some reason to believe that the better explanation is outside the room - let's say, for example, I have footprints that lead outside the room and the gun is missing - you know, then I've got a problem, right? Well, who shot this guy? Clearly there's no gun in the room. I cannot stay inside the room now for an explanation. The best explanation is a killer, who still has the gun, who is now outside the room.

That simple process of inside or outside the room was what I started to level against the evidence in the Universe. In other words, can I explain the features of the Universe, everything in the room of the natural Universe, by staying inside the room, or is the better explanation outside? If we're going to stay inside this room, we've got to be able to explain everything we see about the Universe with just space, time, matter, physics and chemistry. If you can't explain it with physics and chemistry, and space, time and matter, then you have to jump outside of space, time and matter for an explanation. Well, then you've got a good reason to believe that you've got a

suspect outside the room. And that, of course, if it's the Universe, is going to be something akin to God.

So at some point in my investigation of the New Testament, I had to put a time-out and say, "Stop. It's time now to test my bias toward the natural explanations". Because I would have always said as an atheist, "Yup. Whatever it is, you're going to be able to explain it with science. And you're going to be able to explain it with space, time, matter, physics and chemistry. And if you can't - just give us time - we'll eventually figure it out." And that was my view, but it turns out there are eight features of the Universe that you cannot explain by staying inside the room. And that's what eventually pushed me toward looking at supernatural explanations.

NC: Interesting. I'm just curious - from your investigation, what was the most compelling evidence for God's existence?

JWW: Powerful for me, is this idea that we are in a Universe in which life allegedly came into existence from non-life - through just entirely natural means, according to the atheist worldview. That somehow space, matter, and time, physics and chemistry moved inorganic material - which is even hard to imagine how that comes into existence on its own - but then moved it toward organic biological structures. How does that - how does life originate? Well, I'll tell you that we now know enough - the more we've learned about this over the last 60 years of O-O-L, which are origin of life studies - the deeper the wormhole goes. Because it turns out we discover more and more about the complexity and specificity of molecular structures, that just creates more and more problems from a naturalistic perspective, from a naturalistic worldview.

One of the things we discovered in the last century, last half century - that was also powerful for another atheist named Antony Flew in the last century - was the discovery of DNA - of information code in the genome. Because it acts like information - and by every standard of coding - it is information. And that information instructs the formation of proteins from amino acids; it instructs the little molecular machines from the proteins. So in every stage of this process, it's not random and it's not unguided. In fact, it's guided by information - DNA.

I always put it this way - let's go back to our analogy, of the guy who's lying in the room and he's got an injury, and we're not sure if this is a murder or a suicide, or an accident or natural. What we have is him lying on the ground, and against the wall we have blood spatter. That happens when you fall and hit yourself. So the fact that there is blood spatter, at this point, doesn't tell us much, because physics and chemistry could account for that blood spatter from any number of ways of death - from a suicide, a homicide, or accidental. But if I get there, and on the wall, instead of blood spatter, I have - written in his own blood - *He deserved it* - I am suddenly going to shift from physics and chemistry as an explanation, toward agency, toward mind. I'm not going to say, "You know, he could have just fallen. This could be the result of the fall." No, we're going to say, "No. I'm looking for a suspect now, because the information on the wall cannot come from physics and chemistry, over any amount of time, in any spatial environment, given any source of matter." No, that points to a suspect.

Well, so here we are in the Universe in which we have information in DNA, and we cannot get that information from physics and chemistry. You know, as we all do, from our practical experience, that whenever you see information, it must come from mind. So if you think you can get information into the genome from physics and chemistry, that burden is on you. And I'm willing to wait, because you will never find a way to get information. You might get complexity, but you'll never get specificity from physics and chemistry, but you could get it from a mind. And this is what Antony Flew struggled with after a lifetime - 80 plus years - a renowned atheist, who had written and debated theists - he was considered one of the top atheists in the world. His last book is that he believed there was a God, and primarily he believed this now, at the end of his life. He didn't die a Christian - he died basically a theist - because he ended up having a hard time reconciling the information in DNA. I think that's very strong evidence for the existence of God.

NC: Joining me today is author and cold case detective J. Warner Wallace. So let's just keep digging, because you mentioned eight different areas that you researched. So let's talk about another one, and I think it's actually probably one of the most highly debated topics today, and it's that of morality - because you just talked about the origin of life. But morality - I debate with Christians today about objective truth, objective morals - so I'm competing against Christians and non-Christians. So what'd you find out about morality?

JWW: Well, okay, there's only two ways that truth comes at us, including moral truth. It's either a matter of objective grounding or subjective grounding. What I mean by that is, okay, here's a remote controller. Okay. Now I can make the claim: This is a remote controller. I can also make the claim: This is a cheeseburger. And it turns out that claim is either going to be grounded in what the thing itself is - what is the object really? Or it's going to be grounded in - what is my opinion of the object? So I could say: Cheeseburgers are good. We all have subjective opinions. They are grounded in the subject - the person who makes the statement - and I might like cheeseburgers. But when I say, "This is a cheeseburger", that's a different kind of a claim. That's a claim that is not going to be determined - if it's true - by my opinion. "Cheeseburgers are the best sandwiches ever." Well, who gets to decide that? That's a subjective claim - the subject has to decide it. "This is a cheeseburger" is a different kind of claim. This is decided by the object itself. It's grounded in the object itself. Is it a cheeseburger or is it not? Your opinion cannot change it - cannot make it a cheeseburger - if it's not, okay. And even if we agreed as a group - the entire culture agreed - "This is a cheeseburger," you still don't want to eat it, and you're not going to survive eating a bunch of these, because there's no calorie content to the remote controller.

So the point is, that there are both subjective claims and objective claims. And it's really hard to deny that reality, right? Now you can say, "In my opinion, there is no car barreling down the street at 80 miles an hour. I can step into the street." People who hold that view don't live very long. The reality of the 80 mile-an-hour car is grounded in the object called the 80-mile an-hour car. Well, the question then becomes, are moral claims - moral truth claims - are these in the category of subjective or objective? That's the big struggle.

Now I will tell you, there's only two ways you can be subjective. A person, one subject, holds the view. If that's the case - I said, for example - "It's immoral to kill babies for the fun of it" - okay, I hold that view - is that grounded? Is that an objective claim about moral truth, or is that a

subjective claim? Well, if it's a subjective claim, and I hold it, and you said, "Well, no, actually I think it's okay to kill babies for fun," how can I adjudicate between those two? You're no less a person than I am. So therefore, if that is a view that is dictated by persons, subjectively, I don't have a right to tell you you're wrong, and you don't have a right to tell me I'm wrong - unless you're telling me, I'm less of a person than you are. So if that kind of a claim is subjective, then we really can't argue with people, who think it's okay to kill babies for fun.

Well, you might say, "Well, yeah, but in our country, that there's a law." Okay. Then you're still grounding it subjectively, but you're grounding it in a larger group of subjects - your society, your culture, your nation. But if there's a nation out there that says, "It's okay to do it," when you say, "It's not", are they right or wrong? Are you saying they're less of a nation than you are? Are you saying, "Well, I need more people to agree." Well, if that's the case, are you ready to bend your knee right now to whatever it is that China believes? They outnumber us. No, clearly, these kinds of things are rooted in something that transcends.

By the way, this is exactly what the soldiers did in World War II, in Germany, when the leaders of the Nazi regime were brought in front of a trial at Nuremberg. They said, "I don't care that we lost the war. Just because we lost, does not mean that you now can come and judge us. Because when we were in control of our own nation, we were promoted for this behavior. As a group, we said it was okay to do this, and then we were promoted for this behavior. As a matter of fact, if we had disagreed, we probably would have been executed. So we were just doing what the group said." And they didn't get off. It's not like that was a reasonable excuse, and therefore they let all these people go.

There was a three judge tribunal who judged those war criminals from Germany. And it was a Russian, a British and an American justice. Robert Jackson was the American justice. He later became a Supreme Court justice. And what he said in that trial was, "No, there's a law that kind of governs the law. There's a law above the law, above all of the laws of these countries." In other words, he argued that this behavior was transcendentally evil, transcendentally wrong. He was arguing for objective morality, not grounded in the subject of opinion of an individual, or the subject of opinion of a group, but grounded instead in something objectively, that transcends both.

And I think that is - we have an intuitive sense of this. And if you think you don't, next time you disagree about a law, just violate that law in front of the other person. They're going to say, "Well, wait a minute." And it's not on the basis of anything, other than we innately know. And all that's left, by the way - once you discover something is objectively true, rather than subjectively true - all that's left is to discover if it's true or false. In other words, when I said, this was a cheeseburger, the only thing left, after I discover - is that a subjective thing? No, it's an objective thing - Okay, so it's an objective claim about this thing - All that's left is to discover if it is a cheeseburger or not. Is that a true claim or a false claim?

So, you might say having sex before marriage is immoral. Okay, well, that's an objective claim. That's an objective moral claim. It may be a false objective moral claim, or it may be a true objective moral claim. The only thing that's left to decide, after you decide that it's objective, is to decide is the claim true or false? And so I would argue that - look, we have a duty and we ought to be - if I said to you, for example, "I think that NyQuil will cure my cancer. It's my opinion that it will." - Well, it turns out your opinion's not going to make NyQuil the cure for

cancer. That's rooted in the object called NyQuil. [Right.] If it doesn't cure your cancer, I would hope you would argue with me, and teach me the difference between objective and subjective. And the same thing is true with moral truth. I have no problem with the argument. As a matter of fact, I think we ought to be making the argument, because if it's objective, then we have to decide, are these claims true or false?

NC: And I have to say, I think the moral argument is one of the strongest ones for God's existence, in my opinion. I really do enjoy that. And it gets people to really wrestle with it. And I think it's a fun, interactive topic. But you were digging deeper as well. There was one piece that when I got to the chapter, I'm like, "Wow, I can't believe you're actually tackling it." The piece of evidence was the relationship between our free will and God's sovereignty. Okay, I would love to know what you discovered in that, because I was blown away by you tackling that topic.

JWW: Well, this is a hot topic issue, even for those of us who believe in God's existence - and especially for Christians - where we have Scripture that talks about the predestined position that we hold as believers, that God predestines or foreknows so much. So the question becomes, "Well, okay. So we have this experience in which we seem to experience freedom of thought, for example, and without it, there's a lot that we're missing in our life, that we take for granted." So for example, if you think that you are loving somebody, truly love somebody, you have to have the freedom to love. If it was just programmed in that you were going to love this person, and you didn't have the personal freedom to do so, well, then you really can't call it love. It's just a reaction - kind of like when you hit your elbow and your arm jerks - it's like a reflexive reaction. You have no control over it. Now we actually think we decide who we're going to love. We actually think we decide between two propositions, which makes more sense. In other words, love is dependent on free agency, but so is rationality, because you cannot be rational, unless you have the ability to choose between options, rational options, explanations. You can't have creativity for example. Creativity is about moving in a certain direction, with other creative options on the table you chose not to go to. Also, you can't have culpability. How could you hold me responsible for my behavior, if in the end, everything is predetermined by God? Hold Him responsible; don't hold me responsible.

So there's a mystery clearly, and Christianity is divided on this. You have people who would say it's all God's sovereignty, and no free agency of man; and people who say it's all free agency, and no sovereignty of man; or people who are in the middle, who try to find a way to how these two things could be compatible. I hold the view open-handedly, because I can see how the theological case could be made for one position or the other. And when I see that happening, that you can make the case for one position or the other from Scripture, I'm inclined to believe this is not as cut and dry as people would like to think it is. In other words, it's probably a non-essential that is not as clear in Scripture as you'd like to think it is.

But here's what I do know is, that there's no way to get free agency under an atheistic worldview, because if atheism is true, everything that sets into motion in the universe, is set into motion by space, time, matter, physics and chemistry. And like dominoes, you have one kind of causation - event causation. There is no agent causation in an atheistic worldview. So this is why it's sometimes called determinism, or physicalism, or materialism - in other words, everything is a domino that will only fall if another domino falls against it. Even your thoughts are simply caused by physical neurons, firing in your brain - your physical brain - that cause a certain

reaction that you interpret as free agency - when actually, it's not. It's caused by a prior determined set of sequences, that began when the Universe came into existence. Everything under that worldview is determined by prior physical events, because there are no non-physical entities under that worldview: no souls, no minds, nothing non-physical. You have a brain, but not a mind. And you don't have the kind of agent causation. Instead, everything is determined by physical processes of your physical brain, in a physical universe that is entirely determined by physical events.

Now, if that's the case, many a committed atheist in this regard, who are educated in this area - like Sam Harris, who's a neuroscientist and an atheist philosopher - he's written two books on this - and he argues that you don't have the free agency you think you have, because you can't under an atheist worldview. And you don't have, you know, a mind. You have a brain, but not a mind, and even moral choices. In other words, you remove culpability altogether if you can't make moral choices, if you have no free agency.

The question is, how can I get this immaterial thing called a mind? And how can I break the sequence of physical determinism under an atheistic worldview? Is there another way though, if the Universe is created by a mind, that creates beings in its own image that also possess minds - they can act freely? Well, this will be a very different kind of Universe. It would be a universe that's very similar to the Universe you and I experience. And that's why I think that that view is actually a better explanation for the ...By the way, if you think, "Like we all have firsthand common experience of free agency; we all have firsthand common experience that we're listening to this right now, and asking, 'Is what he's saying true?'" Well, are you making that decision freely? You think you're making the decision freely, whether you agree with me or disagree with me. You're not thinking, "Well, whatever I think here is not really my thought - it's actually determined by physical processes in my brain." No, you actually think you're thinking freely. Therefore, if you're suggesting that I don't have this kind of freedom, because my common experience tells me I do, your evidence better be really good. And that's the problem. The evidence is not really good. My common experience, and the common experience of millions of humans who have lived on Planet Earth, is that we do have this kind of free agency. Only under the theistic worldview is free agency possible - only there. It's not available. Now, it means that at some point under the theistic worldview, that God would have to release his ability to control everything to those that He loves, that He has created. But then you could argue that that does or doesn't happen. But the point is, God could release control. Physics cannot. Physics, working on space, time and matter, cannot release control. They cannot mentally say in this situation, I'm not going to control every setting. But a deity could.

NC: Our time, unfortunately, is slipping away from us. So let me just pick your brain real quickly. The last piece of evidence that you investigated was the topic of evil. And let's face it, as Apologists - you and I - this has got to be one of the most common pushbacks to Christianity we get. I've struggled with it. I've wondered. I've looked around and said, "What the heck is going on?" So from your perspective, you know, if God exists, why is there evil? What did you discover?

JWW: Okay, well look - I get asked this question so often working criminal cases, because sometimes children are involved. And when you have children, or a child victim, it's really hard to answer that question for parents, who want to know, especially if they're believers, or they were believers, maybe, before the murder occurred. So I try to see it the same way I do one of

my criminal cases. Look, every case I've ever put in front of a jury, trying to explain why something bad happened, is based on a set of evidences, that together, cumulatively, explain why this happened the way it happened.

So when I start talking about evil with God, I'm very careful to not just throw out one thing - "Now this should solve it for all of you." No, actually it's a cumulative case. There are a series of considerations that God would have, to allow - not to be the cause of evil - but clearly if He's all powerful and all loving, why wouldn't he stop it? Well, there's I think there are like seven reasons why He wouldn't stop it. And I'm not going to go into all this with you right now. But I will say that one of the things that's the biggest mover for me is this: As an atheist, I always saw life as a line segment - you know, point of birth - 90 years - point of death. Okay. That 90 year span is what I thought life was all about. I want 90 clean years, die peacefully in my sleep. That's the goal. Okay. Now, if I got cancer halfway across, and suffered for 10 years, and then died miserably, I'd be upset. I'd see that as evil, because my expectation is to live 90 clean. This is what happens in any assessment of evil. If you all live 90 clean years, that were full of fun and joy, and then died peacefully in your sleep, nobody would experience any evil at all. So it turns out that our expectations control a lot of what we experience. If my view of life as a line segment is wrong, it would change my expectations. And this is the view of life I held as an atheist. As a Christian, the geometry is different. Life is about a point that starts at your birth. It runs through the second point, which is called death. And then it runs infinitely in that direction. That's called a ray. Rays start at one point, go through a second point, and continue in the same trajectory infinitely. That's what rays do.

Christianity does not describe your life as a line segment. It describes it as a ray. And the reason why that's important is, that if you were suffered some miserable experience at the age of six months, by the time you were four years old, you'd already forgotten about it, because it was three and a half years in your rear view mirror. It turns out your assessment of evil is always done in the context of your expectation of the 90 clean years. But if life is a ray, instead of a segment, a thousand years into your ray, those 90 years aren't going to seem like all that much. A million years on the other side of the second dot - the longer you go on that side - the shorter this period seems by comparison, until finally, whatever you lived in this life - I don't care if it was the worst 90 years anyone could ever live - it's a millisecond compared to eternity. And the promise of God as a Christian, is that your life is not over when you die. Your life begins at birth, but it never ends. And if that view of the world is true, we have to assess what we've been calling evil differently. But you'll say, "Well now, no one's suffered like my brother when he had cancer. However long he suffered compared to eternity, we've got to stop." What we do sometimes, is we hold a secular view of pain and suffering in life, even though we have the promises of the Christian view, which are very different. [Right.] So to be consistent, I have to always remember that first piece. And I think there are six more factors to consider, but that one factor starts me thinking differently about the problem of evil, and even about my own experiences in this life.

NC: Yeah. I think when we can gain a heavenly perspective, it changes everything about our temporal and finite suffering - though they're real - though they're difficult - it puts a whole different spin on it. And I love what you said about the ray.

Well, Jim, unfortunately our time is up. I can't thank you enough for coming on the show and hope to connect with you again soon.

JWW: Hey, thanks so much for having me. I really appreciate you, brother.