

The Salvation of the Heathen

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"Would God be just if He shut souls out of the Kingdom because someone else was indifferent and failed to obey Christ's command - Go and make disciples?"

This old question, that I have answered a thousand times reminds me again of my duty. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" or with "reverence" Margin 2 Peter 3:15.

As these questions certainly call in question, the justice and mercy of our God we certainly need to approach them with "reverence". It is worthy of notice, that the "much people in heaven" proclaim "For true and righteous are His judgments." When the eternal destiny of people is decided, our Lord will take all things into account - including opportunities, and ability to grasp truth. These will all be weighed in the scales of Justice and Mercy.

JAMES 4:17 "Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin."

ACTS 17:30 "The times of this ignorance God winked at." We do well to also notice that our merciful God takes into consideration, where each was born, his opportunities and what chances he had of knowing truth.

PSALMS 87:4-6 "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writes up the people, that this man was born there."

This passage of the Word of God states "When He writes up His people" He notes that this man was born there. The "there" includes Babylon, Tyre, Philistine and Ethiopia, heathen places of the blackest hue. On of the great day of the final judgment our merciful kind Lord takes all these things into consideration. So the eternally saved sing "Alleluia, Salvation, and glory and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments."

The New Testament gives the same truth of mercy.

ROMANS 2:12 "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. 13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. 15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

This whole passage of Scripture is strangely neglected by the "New Theology". Notice this is the first time "Justified" is found in Romans and is the real key to this wonderful theme. While Romans 3 shows "How" people are justified, this first reference show "Who" are justified. Ignoring this passage of God's word does not get rid of it. It will still have to be faced on the judgment day.

Verse 14: Now the "Gentiles" or heathen are dealt with. When heathen "do by nature the things contained in the law."

Verse 15: This shows the work of the law written in their hearts. This revelation of the evidence of God as revealed in nature and through the Spirit of God, had led to the Law of God being written "in their hearts."

Verse 16: This will all be taken into account "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right." Genesis 18:25

OUR GOD HAS THREE WAYS TO REACH HIS NEEDY PEOPLE.

1. The preaching of His Word, the Bible. This is the greatest and most important.

2. Through His Spirit. Genesis 6:3 "My spirit shall not always strive with man." The Spirit of God strives with all men, that includes the heathen. By this God reaches "all men."

TITUS 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men."

JOHN 1:9 "That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world."

ROMANS 12:3 "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

The "Testimony of Jesus" repeats and reinforces the same merciful truth.

"At times those who have no knowledge of God aside from that which they have received under the operations of divine grace, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. The Holy Spirit is implanting the grace of Christ in the heart of many a noble seeker after truth, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his former education. The 'Light, which lights every man that comes into the world,' is shining in his soul; and this Light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God.

The prophet Micah said: 'When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness.' Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world." Prophets and Kings, page 376, 377.

Now read and ponder this gem of Christ's inspiration:

"In the depths of paganism, men who have had no knowledge of the written law of God, who have never even heard the name of Christ, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. Their acts show the working of a divine power. The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The 'Light which lights every man that comes into the world' (John 1:9), is shining in his soul; and this light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God." Christ Object Lessons, page 385

3. Nature too reveals God and His power:

ROMANS 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Mankind is "without excuse" for the wonders of God's works are revealed into "all the earth."

ROMANS 10:17,18 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

The quotation here is from:

PSALM 19:1-4 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handy work. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the Sun."

In response to this revelation of God's power and glory and the striving of the Spirit of Mercy, we have this inspired comment:

"Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by humans instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God. How surprised and gladdened will be the lowly among the nations, and among the heathen, to hear from the lips of the Savior, "In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me." Desire of Ages, page 638.

WHY SEND MISSIONARIES?

Spurgeon well said. "It is not so much a question as to whether the heathen can be saved without hearing the gospel, but whether we can be saved if we don't give it to them." This is the real question!

MATTHEW 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

It is interesting to note that in the Gospel commission, our Lord does not base the commission on the heathen's need. The first claim of missionary work does not come from the great need of the heathen. It does not come from the blessings of the truth. These are two powerful motives, but they are not mentioned here by our Lord.

The gospel commission comes from the direct command of Christ. It is an express order. The disciples were to become Apostles. Christians are to be missionaries. Christianity must be aggressive. Christians must be active in taking God's message to those that know it not. We must teach the truth of God. The command of Christ is to go "teaching them to observe" the commandments of God. To those that keep this command the promise "Lo, I am with you." We do not preach a dead Christ or an absent Lord. The living Christ is with us.

The question "Do missions pay?" is really none of our business. That is Christ's business. We are to do the teaching of the commandments. The results are in God's hands. How the heathen can be saved without a knowledge of Christ is in the hands of Christ. Our duty is to give them the truth.

May you know the joy as you "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19 margin) of those who walked in the darkness of error and rejoice in the unspeakable peace and joy of working with the One who has "all power", who has the keys of hell and death, and who promises "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Thus the BIBLE and the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY both give a clear answer to this vital question. It has been the teaching of the Pioneers of the Advent Message. Note the following from the American "Signs of the Times". "Questions and Answers." Volume 11, 1919. Pacific Press.

What will be the final end of the millions of Chinese who for hundreds of years had no opportunity to hear of Christ? Did God do all He might have done for these people during all of those years? Had they had the living preacher, could not these have been saved, who will not now have eternal life?

There are in God's great plan many things of which we know nothing, but we cannot say that millions have lived without any knowledge of Christ. They may not have heard His name, they may not have had the theory of the gospel as we hold it; but the apostle Paul declares that they were without excuse. Romans 1:20. And he tells us why they were without excuse, for even though they may have been shut away from God's living human messengers and all printed messages, still "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." And in the tenth chapter of Romans, where the same thought is suggested, of the necessity of hearing the gospel, the apostle asks: "Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Verse 18. But this is simply a quotation from Psalm 19:4.

We recall the striking comment which Bishop Taylor, who did such noble work in Africa among its heathen tribes, made upon Psalm 19:1-6. He commented somewhat as follows: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork"- God's great common school. "Day unto day utters speech" - God's great day school, "and night unto night shows knowledge"- God's night school. "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" God's great common school of the nations. "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world"-God's great common, universal, day-and-night school. Then he told of natives he had found in the very heart of Africa, who had laid aside all their idols, and had reached out after the living God, the God that made all things, and had simply given themselves to Him by speaking the name which they themselves used, saying, "I am your man." Connect that with 2 Chronicles 16: 9: "The eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

One single ray of light shining from the throne of God cherished in the heart and dominating the life, will save. The life may be imperfect, the knowledge may be very limited; but if the dominating thought is of God and loyalty to Him. God requires no more. The Father will bring the added knowledge and the great illumination. All these things the heathen worlds have had, and there have been instances all the way through, among these heathen tribes, of those who have risen above all environments, and have thought out, through the aid of God's Spirit and heavenly angels, the salvation and peace which come through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The wickedest city that we have record of was Sodom; yet God saved Lot out of Sodom, and saving Lot, condemned the rest of Sodom, because everyone in Sodom could have known, just as truly as Lot did, the way of salvation, if they had desired it.

All those teachings which demand another probation for those who are lost are certainly anti Biblical, contrary to the teachings of the apostles. God has done and will do everything that He can, and that man permits, with man's free will, in order to save mankind.

On the other hand, God will not do injustice to those who do not long for these things, or yield to the highest conception of good. Man has misused life; God simply takes it away from him, and man dies. If the heathen have received the law in their hearts, why is the Sabbath not found, as well as other precepts? Romans 2: 14, 15.

The scripture itself reads, "For when gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."

The great principles of the law summed up in the Old Testament, and by our Savior approved, are, supreme love to God and equal love to our fellow men. The heathen who has that to the fullest sense of his capacity certainly will be excused by his own conscience. Yet during that very time, he might have a multitude of wives. During that very time, he might be doing other things that conventionalities of this age would not permit, that greater light from the Word of God would condemn. Just as did Abraham, just as did Jacob. The law written in their hearts is primarily not complete knowledge, but complete principle of doing right. God has expressed this in 2 Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

That is what God asks-the perfect affection, the perfect heart. The one dominant thing that moves the man, is his affection, his love. He may know scarcely anything. He may have seen but one ray of light from the throne of God; but that ray of light dominates his life, and the man who yields himself to that ray of light is accepted of God. But the man who has a knowledge of all the Ten Commandments of God's law, and yet yields himself to one sin, however small it may seem, turns away from the light, and will be rejected. It is not knowledge that saves us, that is, mental knowledge, intellectual knowledge; it is the life of God in the soul, which comes by our yielding ourselves absolutely to all the light we see. The heathen who has that in his heart, will yield to all the light that comes to him - to the sixth commandment, the seventh commandment, the eighth commandment, the fourth commandment. It is to him then only a matter of revelation as testing the love that is in his heart, and that love is held by the Master for obedience to God's law.

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