

Will All People Be Saved?

by

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When we look at the religious scene today, we find that people are believing in some very strange things. We see them placing their faith in astrology, witchcraft, Buddha, magic crystals, and even the power of the Nile River. We see them trusting in the theory of evolution, although it means believing that life came from dead matter, and there is absolutely no evidence to support that belief. Yet, these things are accepted without question.

When it comes to the idea of life after death, just about all of these same individuals would say that everyone is going to be saved. In fact, surveys show that most people consider themselves headed for heaven when this life is over.

It is easy to see why this belief is so popular. When a wife loses her husband to death, she may go to the minister and say, "My husband was not a Christian, but he was so kind and generous, and he was such a good father to our children. How could God condemn him to hell?" A young person may be writing a report at school on the life of Gandhi. After preparing material on this man, the student says, "Gandhi was so Christ-like. Won't God take that into account? Isn't it possible that Gandhi will be saved, even though he was not a Christian?"

Most of us have considered questions like these at one time or another, because there is

a universal tendency to believe that God will not be as strict as some groups teach and that just maybe He will save everyone after all.

This doctrine is known as universalism. Several denominations today teach it, and others have variations on it. For example, one group believes that there is a place of temporary punishment; lost souls will spend time there in hard work, but later they will be allowed to leave that place and go to heaven.

Is the teaching of universalism correct? Will all people be saved?

Those who say yes want to emphasize the goodness of God. There is certainly no problem in saying that God has been very good to us. We have the seasons of the year to enjoy. There is rain for the crops and flowers, and there is sunshine for all living things. We see the stars and constellations in the sky at night, and we know that God loves us and wants us to live in a beautiful world. There are waterfalls and streams and oceans for us to enjoy. There is the companionship of a husband and a wife, and there is the joy we see in the faces of our children.

Yes, God has been good to all people, but the question still remains. Will all people be saved? Let us consider a passage in the

New Testament that will answer that question. It is Hebrews 10:26-31.

Some People Will be Lost

The writer of the book of Hebrews began this Scripture by pointing out that some people will be lost. He wrote:

Hebrews 10:26-27 - For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

This is not a very pleasant passage; in fact, if we had been writing the Bible, we probably would have left it out. It would be very comforting to people if they could just be told that everybody will be saved. We don't fill the pews by announcing that the lesson will be on the fact that many people will be lost. However, we did not write the Bible, and God has told us that when we speak, it must be only what He has commanded us to say (1 Peter 4:11).

Nevertheless, people still try to avoid the force of Hebrews 10:26-27. They like to say, "We're all going to heaven, just by different roads," or "It doesn't matter what we believe, as long as we are sincere." Some say, "God doesn't care what church we are members of, as long as we believe in Him, because going to church doesn't make us Christians." Others say, "The Bible is too hard to understand; God doesn't expect us to read it and understand it."

Many people claim, "I am a good moral person, and I don't believe that God will condemn me." It is very common today at the funeral of such a person for the one officiating to speak as if the one who has died was almost sinless and that there is no

question about that person's salvation. Preachers have often misled those at funerals into believing that God does not take into account if a person has obeyed the gospel of Christ.

But the force of Hebrews 10:26-27 must still be answered. The clear message in this Scripture is that some people will be lost on the Day of Judgment and that these people will experience the fire which will last forever.

Someone may ask, "But why will some people be lost?" To answer that question, think what it would be like if God said that to be saved we had to swim from California to Hawaii. Let us imagine the entire human race gathered on the beaches of California ready to begin the swim to Hawaii. The gun sounds, and after a while we see one man who really took care of his body. He was a great athlete and very muscular, and we see that he is actually 150 miles out to sea on his way to Hawaii.

We look again and see a college student who has not taken good care of himself, but because of his young age, he has still made it 50 miles out to sea. Then we see a man who was a real derelict – he has terrible health and has ruined his life with alcohol. He is only about 100 yards out to sea and is having a very tough time.

What is the difference between these three men? There is no difference between them! They are all going to be lost, since it is impossible to swim from California to Hawaii! If that is the condition for salvation, then there is no hope for any of us.

Likewise, in a spiritual sense, it is impossible for us to save ourselves. The Apostle Paul said that we have all sinned

and have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We are not born with sin, but God gives each of us the freedom of choice, and at a certain age we choose to sin. We therefore become lost in the sight of God, and there is absolutely nothing, by itself, that we can do to save ourselves. Because of that, some people will be lost.

Our Responsibility to Accept God's Offer

The writer of Hebrews continued his discussion of the human situation:

Hebrews 10.28-29 - Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Notice that God has given us a way to be saved: the “blood of the covenant,” that is, the sacrifice that Christ made for us on the cross. The goodness and the anger of God therefore really depend on how people respond to His offer of salvation through the blood of His Son.

Suppose that a man is speaking to an audience, and he places a \$20.00 bill on a table at the front of the auditorium. He then tells the listeners, “This \$20.00 bill is absolutely free; anyone here can have this money.” Who would get the money? It would go to the person who walks to the front and takes the bill and puts it in his pocket. In other words, a person must accept such an offer before that offer can go into effect.

One of the strangest events in American history occurred in 1829. A man named George Wilson had been sentenced by the courts to die. However, President Andrew Jackson examined the case and decided to offer a pardon to Mr. Wilson. But in spite of the pardon, this man was hanged. The reason was that he turned down the pardon. He said, “I don’t want the pardon; I refuse to accept it.” Chief Justice John Marshall ruled on the case and made this statement: “A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the parties implicated.... If it is refused, it is no pardon.”

In a similar sense, God has placed upon us the responsibility of accepting His offer of pardon. That responsibility is a very sobering thing. When we are growing up, our parents take care of paying all the bills. They take us to the doctor when we are sick, and they furnish other things that we need. As we mature, though, we take on more and more responsibility, and the time comes when we have to make decisions about our own lives. That applies in spiritual matters too. The time comes for us we reach the age when we must make some response to God’s offer of forgiveness.

If you are a Christian today, you have decided to accept His plan of salvation and to receive forgiveness, and if you are not a Christian, you have made the decision at this point in life to reject His offer of salvation and forgiveness. Since God has made this offer to all people, their eternal destiny is up to them. God does not force people to obey Him. Therefore, many people continue to live in rebellion to the salvation that God has offered and thus continue on the road that leads to eternal death.

When people reject God’s offer of mercy, why would He be angry enough to torment

them forever? Many times we drive down the highway and see a dead animal on the pavement. What happens to that animal? Other cars will probably run over it. Eventually maybe a road crew will throw the remains of the animal off to the side of the road, and the body of that animal is left there to decay.

Imagine if that were your son, your only son. Suppose that he had been hit by a car and was left there to die and to be run over by other cars. Then the road crew simply threw his body into the weeds beside the road. Would you be angry enough to send the ones responsible for this act into torment forever? All who are parents will shout, "Yes!"

Suppose for a moment that someone sent you word that the entire world could live in peace, in exchange for the life of your child. Think of the millions of people who would benefit by that one sacrifice. All the nations of the world would have security and peace of mind. Would you make such an offering, even for the welfare of every human being on the face of the earth? We would all say that the price was too great.

In principle, though, this sacrifice is exactly what God made. Through the gift of His only begotten Son, He made an offering that would benefit every human being who would ever live upon the face of the earth.

When a person rejects God's offer of salvation, he is trampling under his feet the Son of God (Hebrews 10:29). Now we can begin to see the thrust of this passage. How could God save a person who has deliberately abused His Son?

A person may live a good moral life. He may be a good citizen in the community and be honest and hard working. These things,

however, are like trying to swim to Hawaii – they will not save that person. To refuse God's terms of salvation is to walk on His dear Son, Jesus Christ. The truth which must be preached to all people is that they have sinned and are in a lost condition, and if they die in that condition, they will be lost eternally. Our attitude toward all people on this subject must be the same as Paul's attitude in preaching to people in his day:

Galatians 4.16 - Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?

The Coming Judgment

The writer of Hebrews ended this section with a message that we should always keep in mind:

Hebrews 10.30-31 - For we know Him who *said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay."* And again, *"The Lord will judge His people."* *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

This scripture is what one gospel preacher has called "the heavy artillery of God." It would be good if we could tell people that God was too loving, too kind, and too generous to condemn any person to eternal hell. It would be wonderful if even one verse in the entire Bible taught that people would be punished for only a few years and then would be allowed out of that agony. It would be great if just one Scripture could give us some indication that all people somehow would eventually be saved. Emotionally, we approach God in prayer and say, "No, Lord, it just can't be. Surely we have misunderstood Your message." We want to ask, "But Lord, what about Your goodness?"

The goodness of God is that He has told us about the coming Day of Judgment and has

clearly shown us how we can be saved from that punishment.

There is always someone who wants to say, “Oh, you’re just trying to scare people into obeying the gospel.” Yes, that is correct! It is better if people obey the gospel out of love for God, but if they will not obey out of love, then they should be warned about the wrath of God. Just as there is nothing wrong with a healthy fear of electricity, there is also nothing wrong with a healthy fear of God.

Will All People Be Saved?

The doctrine of universalism is a false doctrine for two reasons. First, those who say that everyone will eventually be saved do not understand the seriousness of sin. Secondly, they do not realize the insult it is to God when people reject His offer of salvation through the blood of His Son.

God has done everything that He can to give us salvation; the doors of heaven are opened wide to all people. The gospel is not the terrible news that some people will be lost forever. Instead, the gospel is the good news that people everywhere have the opportunity to be saved, regardless of how much they have sinned in the past and regardless of their race or nationality or color.

If Satan cannot convince people that everybody will be saved, then he will try to convince them that there is no reason to obey the gospel immediately. He will try to convince them that there is still plenty of time left to accept God’s offer. We often say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions; unfortunately, that will prove to be true in the lives of many people.

There is a legend that one time Satan was talking to his demons in hell. He needed an evil spirit to go to earth and persuade people not to obey the gospel of Christ. Who would volunteer for this assignment?

The first demon stepped forward. Satan said, “How will you persuade people not to obey the gospel?” The demon answered, “I will persuade them that there is no heaven.” Satan replied, “No, that will not work. Most people have a deep seated belief that there is a better life to come when this one is over.”

Another demon stepped forward. Satan said, “And how will you persuade them?” “I will persuade them that there is no hell.” Again Satan answered, “That won’t work either. The human conscience will defeat you. Most people believe that the wicked people will be punished; they just don’t see themselves as being wicked.”

A third demon stepped forward and said, “I will go.” Satan asked him what his plan was. He replied, “I will tell them that there is no hurry.” According to the legend, that was the demon that Satan sent.

With each passing moment, more and more people leave this life, and many of these people had the false idea that they had plenty of time left to obey the gospel.

Actually, there is something in life known as the Big Lie. We all know about it, and even when we see concrete evidence that it is not true, we just believe it that much more. Husbands and wives believe it; doctors and lawyers believe it; soldiers and miners believe it. The Big Lie is that it won’t happen to me. Someone else will get killed in a car accident today, but not me. Someone else will get a fatal form of cancer, but not me. Someone else will get killed by a mass murderer or a terrorist, but not me.”

When it comes to spiritual matters, the Big Lie is more dangerous than ever. Many will be unprepared for the Day of Judgment and will be lost, but people tell themselves that they will not be in that group. However, let us look at what the Lord had to say on this subject:

Matthew 7.13-14 - Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

We can find that gate to heaven, but we must search for it and accept God's terms of entrance. How do we do that?

We must first believe in Jesus:

John 8:24 - Unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.

We must make the good confession that we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God:

Matthew 10:32-33 - Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

We must repent of our past sins and try to live a better life:

Luke 13.3 - I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Then we must be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of our sins:

Acts 2.38 - Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

After that, we must live a faithful Christian life until the Lord calls us home:

Revelation 2:10 - Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

God is calling on you to make a decision about His offer of grace and forgiveness. Not to make a decision is to reject that offer. What will your answer be?

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