Salvation: In Christ Jesus
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Here is a person who has not obeyed the gospel of Christ. Perhaps he has never even been taught it. By all accounts, he is a good person; he works diligently, treats his family and neighbors well, and refrains from bad habits. Maybe he is even religious. What if he dies before anyone shows him the Bible’s answer to the question: “What must I do to be saved?” Our hearts yearn to say he will be saved. What does the Bible teach?

Salvation, according to Scripture, is “in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:10). If one is not “in Christ,” then he is lost, presuming he has reached a state of accountability. When we begin making exceptions for people who have never heard the gospel, but have lived the best they know how, or for people who die in traffic accidents on the way to be baptized, or who are in prison and are denied access to baptism, etc., then we drift on the sea of salvation by meritorious works. That is, we drift, pretending he has reached a state of accountability. When we begin making exceptions for people who have never heard the gospel and who may not have been seized by the grace of God, we are forgetting the Scripture: “...for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity” (Jonah 4:2).

There are some great evangelism lessons taught in the book of Jonah. One way to notice them is to evaluate the questions asked in the book, and ask them of ourselves.

First, “Why are you sleeping?” (1:7). For Jonah, they were in the middle of a physical crisis in the storm at sea. For us, we are in the middle of a spiritual crisis! Looking around, we see a lack of spiritual concern everywhere, and more people on the planet than there has ever been. Now is not the time to slumber. Now is the time to wake up and get to work!

Second, “What is your occupation?” (1:8). For Jonah, they could not figure out that he was a prophet because he was not prophesying. Can people tell we are Christians, or do they have to ask? If we are not living it, telling it, and inviting them, will they ever know?

Third, “How could you do this?” (1:10). For Jonah, he had put the ones around him in grave danger because he was not obeying the Lord. If we do not obey the Lord’s commission to teach the Gospel, we are putting the souls around us in eternal danger!

Fourth, “Do you have good reason to be angry?” (4:4). For Jonah, he was angry that the Lord was willing to "revert" from punishing Jonah’s enemies when they repented. What about us? Are we guilty of not wanting to spread the Gospel to people who look different, talk different, smell different, or come from different religious backgrounds? Are we soil testers or seed sowers?

Fifth, “Should I not have compassion?” (4:11). God asked Jonah this, pointing out His willingness to forgive even the pagan, Gentile enemies of Jonah’s people. God is still wanting and willing to forgive all who would believe and obey Him.

We must not run from the job of evangelism! There is too much at stake - Our souls, and the souls of those yet to hear the Gospel!

--Corey Sawyers (Denver, CO)