

## What About Those Who Don't Know?

Joe Slater

Sincere, sympathetic believers agonize over the condition of people who have never heard the gospel, much less believed and obeyed it. Surely God won't hold them accountable, will He? Especially if they're reasonably decent people, God will save them in their ignorance – won't He?

We err by presuming that God will act in keeping with our emotional yearnings. Difficult as it is to do, let us set our emotions aside while God, through His word, enlightens our understanding.

People become lost due to sin. *"Your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you"* (Isaiah 59:2). Ignorance may keep them from knowing how to be forgiven, but ignorance isn't the root problem. Sin is.

Even under the Law of Moses, sins committed in ignorance required an atoning sacrifice. Today the blood of Christ washes away sins, whether committed in ignorance or not; but without that blood, the guilt and penalty for sin remain. And the blood is applied only when one believes and obeys the gospel.

Before his conversion to Christ, Paul (Saul of Tarsus) blasphemed Jesus and persecuted the church. He did so in ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13). His ignorance didn't excuse him. He was lost! Jesus sent Ananias to tell him, *"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins"* (Acts 22:16).

Paul wrote of the pagan Gentiles who were *"alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them"* (Ephesians 4:18). Thank God that Paul and others taught them about Jesus. *"In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"* (Ephesians 1:13).

Ignorance is not bliss! Proclaim the gospel!

## Religion

Being "religious" means praying, singing praises, listening to sermons, and things like that. God desires those things and teaches us to do them and, in some instances, specifies how they are to be done.

Our "Restoration Movement" primarily focused on restoring what should happen in Sunday assemblies. Scripture, however, characteristically shifts the emphasis. The Lord's brother says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).

Worship must be directed to God, be from the heart of the worshipper, and be done as God shows He desires to be worshipped. Scripture shows clearly, however, that God is even more concerned with how we treat our fellow man Monday through Saturday.

Old Testament prophets denounced those whose sacrifices were correctly offered and who celebrated the right feast days, but who, all the while, were plotting how to cheat the poor.

Jesus twice (Matthew 9:15 & 12:7) quoted the same Old Testament verse (Hosea 6:6), "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," adding, "Go and learn what this means!"

--Cecil May, Jr. (via Preacher Talk)

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## Bad, Good, Best

*A Good Thing*

*Can Become A Bad Thing*

*When It Keeps You From the Best Thing*

--Quoted by Kevin Langford, Summer Series 6/10/20

## Assisted Living

I received a notice from a friend awhile back that informed me of some mutual acquaintances who are now living in an assisted care facility. These people lived a very active life, but age has caught up with them.

My mother refused to move from her apartment to an assisted living facility because she felt she was giving up what little independence she had. There is something about our culture's glorification of rugged independence that causes people to think they have no need to depend on anyone.

The truth is that no one makes it through life on their own. We are all participants in "assisted living" from the womb to the tomb. There are numerous people who are involved (parents, friends, teachers, employers, neighbors, etc.) in giving assistance along the way. We receive assistance from each other in various forms: encouragement, financial, emotional, physical, etc. We also receive assistance from the One who assists the best.

We have all tried independent living and found it to be dangerous, if not deadly. That is why hikers and swimmers and skiers don't go it alone (or shouldn't).

Sometimes we read of a patient who is in a care facility claiming that he/she has not received the attention they needed. God is not like that. He is faithful and lives up to his promises.

Whatever our need may be, (wisdom, courage, strength, etc.) He is there to give it to us. Thank God for His foresight in giving us this needed assisted living environment.

--Dennis Russell (Santa Maria, CA)