

Does the Gospel Save or Condemn?

by Wayne Goff

“What about that poor soul in some foreign land who has never heard the Gospel? Will he be saved or lost?”

We have all been faced with this dilemma before, and *emotionally* we would like to say that such a person will certainly be saved if he has never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Is God just in condemning someone who does not know the Bible and its standard?

We are **challenged** to consider *God’s Word* and the *consequences* of affirming that such a person will be saved without the Gospel.

1. If one person can be saved in ignorance without the Gospel of Christ, then every person can be saved in ignorance without the Gospel of Christ, and therefore Christ died in vain.

The power of this argument is seen in the heinousness of sin and the justice of God. God **so loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the world (Jn. 3:16)! That tells us that there was *no other way* to save man but through the death of Jesus Christ. If there had been another way, then God surely would have chosen it. Do we think God turned His back on His Son’s request to “*let this cup pass from Me*” (Matt. 26:39) while harboring in His mind an *easier* solution?!

Jesus Himself could have called from heaven “*more than twelve legions of angels*” to be saved from the cross. But He did not choose this option because “*How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it **must** happen thus?*” (Matt. 26:53-54). The infinite mind of God knew no other way to both be “*just*” and the “*justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*” (Rom. 3:26).

2. Jesus commanded His apostles to “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations . . .*” (Matt. 28:19). If ignorance is bliss, **then** the apostles were commanded to go *remove that ignorance* with the risk that those of “*all nations*” might reject that knowledge of the Gospel and **now** be lost! Wouldn’t it be better to leave *all nations* in ignorance, thereby *guaranteeing* their salvation -- if ignorance saves? Therefore, the **fact** that Jesus commanded the Gospel to be preached to “*all nations*” and “*every creature*” (Mk. 16:15) teaches us that the ignorant cannot be saved in their ignorance. The word “**gospel**” means “*good news.*” It could only be good news if the message were one of salvation, and not condemnation.

Jesus Himself said in John 3:17 “*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*” Men were condemned in their sins already. The Gospel (good news) is that they can be saved from their sins. Yes, it requires *all men everywhere* to learn, to repent, and to come to God (Acts 17:30-31).

3. **“Would a just God condemn those who have never heard the Gospel?”** This question *assumes* that there are such ignorant people in the world who have never had the *opportunity* to hear the Gospel. I am not willing to grant that assumption because it requires more knowledge and understanding than I possess. In other words, I don’t know everything about everyone. But God certainly does and my faith and trust rests in Him that He will give everyone who desires to learn the truth and be saved a fair opportunity.

We see this very thing in the example of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38). He diligently desired to know the truth, and God sent Philip to him to save him by the preaching of the Gospel. What God did *miraculously* in the first century, He can do *providentially* (*by natural means*) in this century. We know that God desires all men to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus taught us: “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened*” (Matt. 7:7-8). In the first century, the Gospel **was** preached to every creature (Col. 1:5-6, 23). What was done then can certainly be done today! You and I must be willing to help spread the Gospel to the whole world.

With such an abundance of biblical evidence before us, we can rest assured that if there is an honest soul who desires to be saved, **then** God will provide a way through the preaching of the Gospel. He does not need to tell me when and how it was done for me to believe it.