



THE FOREST HILL NEWS

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What About Those Who Never Hear The Gospel?

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

Some have challenged the justice and benevolence of God on the basis of His condemnation of those who never have the opportunity to obey the Gospel: “What will happen to those folks who never are given an opportunity to know Christ and His teaching?” Several factors deserve consideration.

All human beings of accountable age and mind have sinned by violating God’s commands (Romans 3:9ff.,23; 1 John 3:4). Sin condemns a person to an eternal hell—there are no exceptions (Matthew 10:28; et al.). The only way a person can escape the consequences of his sin is to be forgiven by God.

But the nature of deity is such that God cannot merely wave aside sin and forgive. To do so would literally violate His infinitely holy, righteous/just nature. So God had to formulate a plan by which He could forgive human sin in harmony with His divinity. The one and only suitable means of atonement (“propitiation”—Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2) was for God to come in person in the flesh and offer Himself for our sins. He did so through the person of Jesus Christ—God in the flesh. This incredible sacrifice/scheme of redemption is what the Gospel is all about: it is the Gospel—the good news that Jesus opened a way for humans to be forgiven.

However, that tremendous plan of salvation requires an obedient faith response (Romans 1:5; 16:26). That response consists of hearing and understanding the Gospel (Acts 8:30-32; Romans 10:17), believing that Gospel and the One Who offers it (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), repenting of sin (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3), and being immersed in water to contact the blood of Christ in order for sin to be cleansed (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16).

In view of these plain biblical truths, it clearly follows that all persons who do not contact the blood of Christ cannot be forgiven by God. God is, in fact, **powerless** to forgive them. It would be completely contrary to His nature—and therefore ungodlike—for Him to try to forgive a person on some other basis than the blood of Christ. But the **only** way to contact the blood of Christ is to obey the Gospel (Romans 2:5-9). Those who do not obey the Gospel will be lost eternally in hell (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17). It unmistakably and logically follows that God cannot and will not forgive anyone who has not been immersed into Christ—since they have not contacted the blood of Christ, the one and only means of atonement. We are forced to conclude that no one can be saved who does not hear the Gospel and obey it (Acts 4:12). If a person can be saved without hearing and obeying the Gospel, then Jesus did not need to come to Earth and die for sin.

With these facts in mind, the issue now shifts to a different question: Is God fair for condemning to hell all those who do not come into contact with the Gospel? The Bible offers a clear response. First, all human beings can and must come to the conclusion that God exists based on the readily available evidence of the incredible Creation that reflects the presence of the Creator. After all, “He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons,

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Forest Hill

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Ministers:

Barry M. Grider,
Pulpit Evangelist
Matthew Jones,
Personal Evangelist
Hatton Allen, Youth

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.... 10:30 A.M.
Afternoon Worship.....1:30 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). Indeed, “[t]he heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19:1-4). “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are **without excuse**” (Romans 1:20).

This knowledge should motivate all persons to seek Him, as Paul explained to the Athenians: “that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:27). In seeking Him, they will come into contact with Christianity and the Bible: “those who seek me diligently will find me” (Proverbs 8:17; cf. Matthew 7:7-8). For those persons who possess an honest, noble, and good heart (Luke 8:15), examination of the Bible will cause them to conclude that it is the only book on the planet that possesses the attributes of divine inspiration (John 7:17). Hence, they will learn about the Gospel and the need to obey.

Second, the Bible also teaches that all persons on the planet who have a heart that is receptive to the truth will have access to that truth via the providence of God. God will make certain (without performing any miracles) that they come into contact with His Word. When God spoke to Paul while in the city of Corinth and stated, “I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10), He meant that there were individuals who would be receptive to the divine message once they encountered that message. Hence, Paul was God’s instrumentality for reaching those potential converts (cf. Acts 10:4ff.; 16:9ff.). World evangelism, i.e., announcing the Gospel to the world, is an ongoing task for the Church. All Christians who are yielded to the will of God, willing to be used in His service, will have opportunities to influence people with the truth. God’s purposes will not be thwarted. In His unfathomable providential dealings in the world, God can interface receptive hearts with those who will introduce them to the good news (Acts 8:30; 10:24ff.; Colossians 1:23). (The Internet has only enhanced this accessibility to the Gospel even further.) He will see to it that receptive hearts are contacted.

Third, observe that all those who will not accept the truth, even if presented to them, need not be confronted with that truth, since God knows they

would reject it. So the question, “What about those who never hear the Gospel?” suggests that there are innocent, honest people who would accept the truth if they heard it, but never get a chance to hear it. **No such people actually exist.** All those who **will** accept God’s truth will be given an opportunity to accept it via God’s providence and their own honest searching (Matthew 7:7-8). All those who never hear the Gospel would not have accepted it anyway.

A fourth and final observation pertains to the fact that the Bible plainly teaches that the vast majority of humanity throughout the 6,000+ years of world history have not desired the truth and would not have received it if presented to them (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 1 Peter 3:20). Hence, the task of getting the Gospel to those who will receive it is considerably reduced in magnitude. Indeed, the multi-pronged combination of avenues through which efforts are made to reach the lost, including missionaries, printed materials, word of mouth, radio/TV, Internet, et al., are such that those whose hearts are receptive will have the opportunity to access the truth.

The nature of God is such that He must allow all human beings to act as free will agents and make their own choices regarding their eternal destiny. Hence, He will not interfere with their will. Nevertheless, He has done everything He can possibly do to enable mankind to access the Gospel message so that all can be forgiven of sin and live with Him forever. After all, God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” and He “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

(Reason & Revelation, July 2018)

PRESIDE: John Manning
ASSIST: Hatton Allen
 Lewis Elliott
 Ian Huff

Kirk Teachout
 Nick Aubrey
 Cason Grider
 C.J. Stafford

A.M. OPENING: Paul Connell
A.M. CLOSING: Daniel Fairley
P.M. OPENING: Robert Berch
P.M. CLOSING: Steve Allmond

If you are unable to lead prayer or serve at the Lord's table, please contact Cedric Huff or Paul Connell.

RECORD, WEEK of July 8, 2018

BIBLE STUDY: 240
 A.M. WORSHIP: 300
 P.M. WORSHIP: 180
 CONTRIBUTION: \$19,497.00

HOMEBOUND

Bessie Berry
 Virginia Ditto
 Hazel Eskew
 Tommy & Nell Herndon
 Doris Jean Cole
 Anita Hopper

Albert & Ruth House
 Betty Jones
 Clarine Justice
 Jerry & Betty Robbins
 Velton & Dorothy Trimm

OUR SICK

Tony Callahan, recovering at home from accident.
Phil Houston, will have a double nerve block this week.
Gene Kuehn, Memphis Jewish Home, Room 105B.

OUR SYMPATHY IS EXTENDED TO:

The family of Helen Newsom, whose funeral service was conducted at Forest Hill Tuesday, July 10.
 Marsha Beliew, in the passing of her brother, James Beliew.

PLEASE CHECK YOUR BOX!

HEARTS AND HANDS

TEAM "C" (DANNY BRADDOCK) and TEAM "D" (RANDY ELLIOTT) will receive assignment cards July 15.

TEAM "D" (RANDY ELLIOTT) will meet Sunday, July 15 after morning service in the fellowship hall for a covered dish luncheon.

EVENTS

LADIES AND MEN'S COMBINED CLASSES will resume July 17. We will meet at Cracker Barrel for breakfast at 8:45.

2018 SUMMER SERIES Wednesdays, June 20-August 8. Theme: *Add to Your Faith...(A Study of the Christian Graces)*. Speaker July 11: Keith Mosher. Theme: *Add to Your Faith...Temperance*.

JOSHUA GOOTAM of Kakinada, India will be our guest speaker Sunday, July 15 during the afternoon service.

SALT (for ladies) will meet July 17 at 6:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall.

KIRBY PINES Retirement Community worship service each fourth Sunday 8:00-8:45 a.m., conducted by Forest Hill. Our next service will be Sunday, July 22.

ICE CREAM SUPPER and finger food fellowship after Bible Study Wednesday, July 25.

If you and your family are in need of a new picture for the membership board in the lobby, be prepared to have them made this Sunday.

Cakes/Servers are needed for the Southaven lectureship on Tuesday, July 24. Please sign up on the bulletin board if you can help. 20 cakes and 12 servers are needed.

Requesting Prayers: Lawayne House

Last week's solution:
This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

CORNERSTONE
Bible Scramble: Unscramble the letters in each word to discover the passage.
 O USRMLJEEA, USRMLJEEA, WIHHC TSLKIE EHT
 TSRPPOHE, NDA TTSSONE TMHE TTHA REA TSNE UTON
 EEHT; WOH TONFE WUOLD I VHEA TRHGEEDA YTH
 RNLIHEDC TTROHGEE, SA A NHE TOHD TRHGEA RHE
 ROODB URNED RHE WSNIG, NDA EY WUOLD TON!

A Sound Mind

Kenneth Gossett

Sin involves a corruption of the mind. The word of God, in the mind of Eve, was replaced with a lie: “Ye shall not surely die.” Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtly, SO YOUR MINDS SHOULD BE CORRUPTED from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 *Corinthians 11:2-3*).

Many have destroyed their minds with the use of alcohol, while others have become addicted to prescription drugs. Millions have embraced the theory of unity in diversity or some other erroneous philosophy, and in so doing have allowed their minds to be corrupted. Countless members of the church across the land who once were grounded and settled in the faith are now heard to say: “Well, I don’t know what I believe.” False philosophies from the newsstand, bar stool or pulpit will destroy one’s mind and his faith.

Pure Christianity never turned anyone into a “basket case.” The belief and practice of the teaching of Jesus is the best prescription in the world for a wholesome mind. Paul wrote to Timothy: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power, and of love and of a SOUND MIND.”

The Bible records many examples of those whose minds were settled and composed when truth was accepted and obeyed. Jesus said of the lost son, “He came to himself,” i.e., he came to see his real condition and need. When he returned to his father all was well (*Luke 15:11-32*). The Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing, after he learned and obeyed the gospel (*Acts 8:26-30*). Saul quit praying and fasting and he was baptized upon learning the truth from Ananias (*Acts 9:1-18*). The next verses say, “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God” (*Acts 9:19-20*).

Truly the faithful child of God has nothing to be ashamed of, nor should he be afraid. Rather he should fill his mind with the precious truths of the Scriptures and live life to the fullest every day. Peter wrote: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (*1 Peter 1:13*).

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