

It Is Written

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Salvation

By Doy Moyer

I do not believe that Scripture teaches universal salvation in the sense that, in the end, no one is lost and every single person is saved.

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36). There will be a "resurrection of judgment" along with the resurrection of life (John 5:28-29).

Suppose that I am wildly wrong about this. Maybe I am. Perhaps I have so misunderstood what Jesus taught and what Scripture teaches that my whole theology about this is greatly mistaken. Let's say that in the end, when all is said and done, every last person who ever lived is saved and with God in Paradise.

Would I be upset about that? I hope not, for I do not want to be a Jonah about anyone's salvation! In fact, there is a part of me that wishes I am completely wrong about this matter. I never want to glory in the loss of souls, and I do want for all to be saved in the end (cf. God's desire, 2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4). I would hope that if I prove to be greatly in error about this that I would finally rejoice for all who were saved that I never believed had any hope whatsoever. And, being wrong about it, I wouldn't be too terribly bothered in the end because I'd still be saved with all the rest who were terribly wrong.

My point here, though, is not to say that I think Scripture is unclear about this. We are in no position to teach what God's revelation does not; we must only teach that for which we have God's revealed mind. We know that God is just and holy, and He will always do what is right and in love. If He chooses to do something in ways I have not understood or realized, then that is entirely His divine right, and I would have no right to argue with Him about it. If He saves those who I think are lost, He is completely within His right to do so, and He does not need my permission or approval. God is Sovereign. I do not believe He is unfaithful to His word (let God be true and every man a liar), but I also recognize that God's wisdom and knowledge are far greater than mine can ever be and that He can do what I cannot think. Yet I can only hold out hope for those who have put their trust in Him (cf. 1 Pet 1:3-5; Heb 11:6).

The other point, though, is to be reminded about our attitude toward the lost. People will suffer "eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess 1:9). Even so, I do not want them to be lost. Do you? I do not believe that we can, based on our feelings, preach someone into heaven when that person has ignored and rejected God and His will (cf. Acts 13:46), but I do believe we can be generous and merciful in our attempts to teach and persuade (Col 4:3-6). We can pray for them to be receptive to the Gospel. We can keep working with the end goal of salvation in mind. It matters not who they are, where they come from, what their political affiliation is, or what they have done. But for the grace of God, none of us can have hope.

It is a great comfort for me to remember that God is the Judge, and He will judge righteously. For our part, let us seek the salvation of all while we seek to please God in what we do.

It's Not How You Feel

By Aubrey Belue

Does it "feel good?" Does it feel "right?" If so, today's culture says, "go for it!" Thus, we make "right" what our feelings say it is, rather than what it really is. Somehow, we have reached the point in contemporary reasoning that most say that one can pursue his individual dream without having to confront the consequences of bad or wrong choices. Believe in God, or not; accept Christ, or not; live morally, or not--to those people, it is all the same. Do what you want to do, what you feel like doing, what you think is right in doing, and God will just

set aside HIS rules to approve of you regardless. We confuse civic freedom with divine approval, and so long as it is "legal" (and some are not too "picky" about that), it is seen as acceptable.

The question is, "Is our standing with God determined by our feelings, or by the rule of divine law?" Is it a matter of God's will, or ours? Serious consequences follow the reasoning described above:

1) It nullifies the Bible as a defining book. In fact, the Bible becomes largely useless, since it can at any point be superseded by one's personal feeling. No doubt we "feel" like it has some value, but it can always be overridden by our feelings. There is no sense of responsibility to conform to its message.

2) It glorifies human wisdom and authority. The highest court of appeal becomes the human mind and thought, rather than the mind of God. If what I feel is right, even if it contradicts what God teaches in His word, then MY idea is seen as better than His; my authority as greater than His. In so doing we minimize the greater wisdom and power of an Almighty God.

3) It results in anarchy and chaos. Rejecting a common source of authority -- the written word of God -- each becomes his own source. There are as many "rights" as there are people to think them up. No wonder we live in troubled times. No wonder our children are so confused as to morals and religion. Countless competing human ideas bombard them (and us) with equally justifiable claims to what is "right".

4) It ignores God's place in our universe. He has defined right from wrong, sin from righteousness, truth from error. Any course conflicting with His "law" exacts terrible penalties.

The Truth? The solution to mankind's problems lie not in human minds, but in the unsearchable mind of an all-wise God. As we have observed before in this column, it is His world, we eat His bread, drink His water, and breathe His air. In addition to being ill-equipped by nature and inclination to determine "right", we belong to Him, and are obligated to be obedient. Man's way never "fixes" anything important, nor moves us one step toward fellowship with God. This may not be the popular line, but we are interested in TRUTH, not compromise, and all human objections aside, God's word is still TRUE, and His way is still the only way (John 14:6).

How Well Do We Study?

By Doy Moyer

Lazy study habits make for a cheap faith, and a cheap faith means a weak faith, which eventually leads to little or no faith. There is a direct correlation between the quality of our study and the quality of our faith. Faith comes through hearing God's word, but the hearing must be more than recognizing sounds, words, and sentences. It must be an understanding faith grounded in the total message if it is to rise above the level of children who are prone to be tossed about by every wave of doctrine.

Devote yourself to God. Devote yourself to knowing His word. Devote yourself to knowing the Word.