

HOW I KNOW GOD WANTS EVERYONE TO BE SAVED

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I TIMOTHY 2:8

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" - 1 Tim.2:4

I have met a few people in my Christian experience who felt that they were excluded from the atonement and from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I never shall forget a sad experience I had with a man who came to this church many years ago. One night while riding with him in the car, I was talking to him about how he could know he was saved - how he could have assurance in his heart. He had said that at times he thought he was saved, but then again he did not know whether he was saved or not. In the darkness of the car, he said to me, "I am afraid, Brother Tom, that I am predestinated to be lost and that God did not intend for me to be saved in the first place."

I am absolutely positive that is not true, and I can take the Bible and prove that the will of God is that every man or woman be saved. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto knowledge of the truth" does not mean that everyone will be saved. The doctrine of Universalism, which is a false teaching, teaches to the effect that sometimes God is going to change His mind and He is not going to let anyone be lost; He is not going to let anyone suffer; He not going to let anyone go to Hell; and finally He is going to save everyone. Not one verse in all the Holy Bible intimates such teaching. The Scripture says, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

There are two different verbs in the New Testament for will. One expresses determination; the other, desire. If the verb in this verse were the verb for determination - if God were determined that there would be no one in Hell - there would be no one in Hell. But this is not what the verb means. It is the word for desire. This verse teaches that God desires that everyone be saved, that no one be lost, that all come

to the knowledge of the truth.

I find in the Scriptures five reasons why I know God wants and desires and longs for everyone to be saved.

I. WE ARE TO PRAY FOR EVERYONE

In I Timothy 2:1 we read, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men."

God said we should pray for everyone. If there were no hope for a person to be saved, would God exhort us to pray for that person? No. Since there is a possibility for everyone to be saved, the Bible says that we are to pray for all men. I don't care how deep in sine the are, how hardhearted they are, how indifferent they are.

I heard just the today of someone who is lost and needs the Lord, but who told one of our workers today, "Shut up! Go on your way! I don't want to hear about it!" That does not mean that we should not pray for him. The Bible teaches that we are to pray for all men everywhere. That fact leads me to believe that it is possible for any and all to be saved because God has told us to pray for them.

Many people have been saved because someone prayed. Many people are in Hell today because no one cared enough to pray for their salvation. I never shall forget reading the accurate account of the mother of Tom Carter. Tom was a prisoner who was sent to prison for many years. While in prison, his mother, who had prayed for him all of his life, got a very special burden to pray that God would save him. She set aside other things and began praying for her lost boy in prison. She prayed that God would not let him die until he was genuinely saved.

In the midst of these four or five days of praying, fasting, waiting on God and travailing for the soul of her son, she received a telegram from the state prison. It read like this:

Dear Mrs. Carter:

We regret to inform you that your son Tom Carter died.

She took the telegram, went back to her knees again, laid it on the floor and bathed it with her tears. She told God, "God, I don't believe it! I don't believe it! I have prayed in faith believing. I have held my boy up to You, begging You to save him. I have

had the confidence in my soul that my prayers were being answered. I don't believe this telegram!"

It is said that Mrs. Carter wadded up that telegram, threw it in the wastebasket and told God, "I still claim Your promises. I believe my boy will be saved."

In only a matter of hours a second telegram came from the state prison. it said:

Dear Mrs. Carter:

We are happy to inform you that we have made an error. There are two men in this prison by the name of Tom Carter. It was not your son who died: it was another man with the same name.

That telegram was followed in a few hours by a letter from her son Tom saying:

Mother, while here in this prison in recent days, I have felt the need of Christ in my life and I have been saved.

Friends, there is no way of knowing how many of us sitting in the house of God, singing songs of Zion and rejoicing in our hope in Christ, were saved because someone prayed. God in His Word says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men."

I know that God wants everyone saved because He wants everyone prayed for.

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

II. CHRIST GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL

We read in I Timothy 2:6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus died for all, died for every one of us--for the lost heathen, for the uncivilized, for those in the past, for those who live now, and for all those who will be born until the end of time. He "gave himself a ransom for all." When Christ died on the cross of Calvary, He died with you and me in mind.

A wonderful verse in connection with this thought is verse 5: "'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There is one God who manifests Himself in three different ways: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Multitudes do not believe

this verse and in a moment, you will know whom I am talking about. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Just one Mediator, not two, not three not several--one God, one Mediator. Who is that Mediator? It is not the Virgin Mary; it is not a Protestant preacher; it is not a Catholic priest. "...one God...one mediator..., can mean only one glorious Person, Jesus Christ.

Mrs. Malone and I have visited the four largest and most historic churches in the Roman Catholic world: Saint Peter's Cathedral in the Vatican in Rome, St. John's Lateran Church, the most historic Catholic church on the face of the earth; Saint Mary's Basilica; and Saint Paul's Outside the Wall. While in Saint Mary's Basilica, I saw some things that I shall never forget. One was a large sculpture in beautiful stone. There is no telling how many thousands of dollars that piece of sculpture is worth. It was of a woman sitting, representing the Virgin Mary. Underneath her feet was an entanglement of men. One was an old haggard-looking man with long hair down to his back. That was John Huss. One with bulging eyes looked like an imbecile. Around both of these men snakes were wrapped. The woman's feet were upon Martin Luther, the Father of the Protestant Reformation.

While looking at that sculpture, I noticed some little booths, like telephone booths. I saw a Catholic nun, a young woman, in one of those booths. There was a perforated piece of board and then the enclosed booth on the other side. Through that perforation you could speak. In that booth was a Catholic priest, hidden from view of all who stood in that great church.

I saw that young Catholic woman come, kneel and cross herself. She had no sooner knelt, garbed in all her black attire, than she began to whisper and confess her sins to a man in that booth. I saw the big tears roll down her cheeks. Then I watched her arise, and with tears still on her cheeks and with the same sad look on her face, and with not one ray of hope or one glitter of peace or one bit of joy in her soul, I saw her walk out, stooped and weeping.

I said to myself that day, and I have said it thousands of times since, Thank God for one to whom we can go who never sins!

Not a man, but a God-man, the spotless perfect Lamb of God who bore my sins, the one and only Mediator.

Any man or woman who says there is more than one Mediator goes contrary to the Book of God. There is one God and one Mediator--no other. That Mediator is Christ Jesus.

You might say, "Oh, but I have heard all my life that you could confess your sins to So-and-So.'" "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'" (I John 2:1).

Don't think I am just "taking off" on the Catholic church. I have the truth at heart. I have as much right to preach what I believe, as they do to advocate what they believe. We see thousands of cars on the road that have a little Catholic image in them. People carry those images because they believe they have some efficacy, some atonement, for protection. Saint So-and-So is to protect you; Saint So-and-So is to help you when you are in sorrow; Saint So-and-So is to help you when you run out of money; Saint So-and-So is to help you when all of your friends have turned their backs on you; Saint So-and-So is to help you when you get sick; Saint So-and-So is to help you when you get old.

Gathered into one glorious, living Redeemer, we have all of those in "one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.'" One Mediator. He gave Himself a ransom for everyone. No one can take this Bible and find anything that would indicate Jesus did not die for your sins. He wants everyone to be saved because He died for everyone.

III. THE TEACHING OF THE SCRIPTURE

In II Peter 3:9 we read, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Titus 2.11, 12 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world...."

So the Bible teaches that God is not willing that any should perish. There is a sense in which God has put everything He can between a lost soul and Hell--the Bible, a bloody cross, the church of Jesus Christ, gospel preaching, the prayers and tears of honest Christians. God is not willing that anyone be lost. He has put every barrier, every stop sign, every blockade, between you and Hell that He could possibly put. That He wants everyone to be saved is the teaching of the Scripture.

The Bible plainly teaches that the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. He is not willing that any should perish. His glorious

salvation is not confined to any one class of people.
He loves the rich, the poor, the learned, the
unlearned, the up-and-out, the down-and-out. God loves
all sinners, every sinner, everywhere.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that,
while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.
5:8). Jesus ministered to all classes of people while
here on earth. His love and saving grace reached to the
very lowest rung of the ladder of human society.

IV. HE HAS NEVER REFUSED ANYONE

I have never met anyone who came to Jesus and was
refused. Have you? There are verses that teach that God
has never refused anyone. I have often said that I can
hardly preach without referring to John 6:37, "All that
the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that
cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The Lord
never refuses anyone.

John Wesley was one of the greatest preachers who
has ever lived. He was a man and a human being, but he
was a miracle himself. John Wesley crossed the
Atlantic Ocean thirteen times when it was a miracle if
anyone got across without disaster. He rode across
this country on horseback and muleback, establishing
Methodist churches and sowing the seed of the Gospel.
John Wesley had an unusual voice. He never used a
microphone. He would preach to as many as forty
thousand people in an open field without a P.A.
system. It is said that his voice would carry a mile.
He would lift up his voice and it would fairly ring
across the heads of thousands of people. He stood at
his mother's grave and preached to many thousands.

One day when he had preached to a large open-air
crowd, Lady Huntington and other royalty went up to him
and said "Mr. Wesley, we would like to entertain you
for tea." So he went to tea. But just before he went
into the home of this royalty of England, someone
handed Wesley a little dirty piece of paper, which he
stuck into his long Prince Albert coat.

While being entertained at tea, one of the royalty
said, "Mr. Wesley, we think you went a little too far
today in your preaching. " "Why do you say that?" this
great Methodist preacher asked.

"Because you made the statement that God would
never refuse anyone. You went so far as to say that
Jesus would take people whom the Devil was even tired
of. You said the Lord would take the Devil's
castaways."

"Yes, I believe that," he answered. As she was
talking, John Wesley reached into his pocket, got the

note and read it.

We are just two old, sinful women, two soiled doves of the London underworld who heard you preach today. We have lived in sin all of our lives. We heard you say that Jesus would take even the Devil's castaways. Hearing that and believing it, we have trusted Him and have been saved.

Mr. Wesley folded the note and looked through the glass of the large and beautiful doors. Out there he saw two old women with their rags gathered about them, standing shuddering in the cold. After reading the note to Lady Huntington and the other royalty, he said, "There are two people out there who have been away from God all of their lives, who have lived in the very gutters of this city. The Lord saved them today.

"All that the Father giveth to me shall come unto me; and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

My friends, there is no record of Jesus Christ ever refusing anyone. Thieves came to Him, and He took them in. When people flung a woman at His feet and said that she deserved to be stoned, He took her in. When a cursing, swearing fisherman crossed His path, He took him in. This Bible teaches that Jesus has never refused anyone. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

V. BECAUSE OF THE GIFT OF HIS SON

Romans 8:32 says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" God gave His Son for you. That is why I know He wants you to be saved.

"He...spared not his own Son." Can you possibly believe that God would give His only begotten Son to suffer and die on the cross of Calvary, then not want you to be saved?

"For God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."--John 3:16.

Someone has told this beautiful and wonderful story:

Long ago, before the days of railways, people could travel only on horseback or by rumbling stagecoach. The arrival of the coach in town or village was a great event. As Harry, a bright but careless boy, came out of school, he waited to see the visitors get out of the stagecoach. Among them was a queer-looking man who swayed from side to side as he walked. Harry laughed aloud and imitated the funny walk of the stranger to the rest of his chums. When he reached

home, his father said, "Come into this room and see a
dear old friend of mine. "

Harry was glad to go, but oh, how ashamed he felt!
There sat the stranger who had arrived on the
stagecoach and at whom he had laughed. But the
gentleman smiled and was very kind.

Then Harry's father told his son that when he
(Harry) was quite little. he (the father) had fallen
into the canal. A stranger plunged in to save him, but
it left him crippled for life.

Harry flushed when he thought of his own bad
behavior toward a man who had saved his father's life.

The Lord Jesus has more than risked His life to
save you from sin. He gave Himself. Oh, such a cruel
death He died upon the cross! He "gave himself a ransom
for all."

You may not love Him now because you know Him not,
but to know the Lord Jesus is to love Him.

"God is not willing that any should perish, but that
all should come to repentance."