



2015 Q3 Biblical Missionaries Lesson 13 Must the Whole World Hear?

This lesson, perhaps more than any other I have taught, seems to walk the tightrope/balance between the natural and imposed law constructs, probably without meaning to...because when they come to a conclusion that can't quite be explained by imposed law or penal substitution, they literally turn to the "God's ways are higher than our ways and whatever He decides, it will be just and fair and every knee will bow." But, invariably, the default position seems to return to support the penal substitution and imposed law model. Did anyone study this week's lesson and find this to be true? See if you can pick up on some of these dichotomies.

So, what comes to your mind first when you hear that question? Hear *what*? If the answer is "the gospel"...does it matter what gospel the whole world hears?

Let's take a look at the memory text in Sabbath's lesson...it is taken from Romans 16:25-27,

"Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

The 1st paragraph in Sabbath's lesson asks two critically important questions. Would someone please read that 1st paragraph loudly for us?

As we have seen, the Lord uses people to bring the message of the gospel to others. However, throughout the ages, millions have died without knowing the biblical plan of salvation. The fact is that a majority of those who have ever lived have not heard the story of redemption or known about the good news of God's grace as revealed in Jesus Christ. This leads to two persistent questions. First, on the day of judgment, how is God going to deal with these billions who have not known Him? Second, is there salvation outside of someone's knowing the plan of salvation as it is in Jesus?

What do you think? On the day of judgment, how is God going to deal with these billions of folks who do not know Him?

Is there salvation outside of someone's knowing the plan of salvation as it is in Jesus?
Naman/Nebucadnezer/Enoch/entire OT/folks in Romans 2:14-16



“When outsiders who have never heard of God’s law follow it more or less by instinct, they confirm its truth by their obedience. They show that God’s law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is something deep within them that echoes God’s yes and no, right and wrong. Their response to God’s yes and no will become public knowledge on the day God makes his final decision about every man and woman. The Message from God that I proclaim through Jesus Christ takes into account all these differences.”

The last paragraph in the lesson starts out really well...and then basically asks us to suspend our reason and judgment, as the penal substitution model falls short of being able to explain this concept. “In the end, the crucial point to remember is that Jesus has revealed to us the character of God, and this tells us a lot about His love for all humanity and His desire for as many as possible to be saved.” I would submit that what Jesus revealed to us about the character of God...doesn’t just tell us a lot, it tells us **everything** about his love for all humanity. “God is a God of justice, and *however He works it out*, the shout will be heard across heaven: “ ‘Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!’ ” (Rev. 15:3, NKJV). However He works it out? Will He really be “working anything out at that point? Or will He simply be accurately diagnosing reality, and giving up/letting go of those folks who refused to love the truth and thus be healed? (2 Thes 2:10).

SUNDAY

No Other Name Under Heaven

The lesson states that some folks, called “Exclusivists”, believe that only those who hear and respond positively to “the Christian gospel” can be saved. What “Christian gospel” do you believe the quarterly is referencing here?

The lesson then says that some Christians take it a step further and claim there is no salvation outside their particular denomination and doctrines, even for other professed Christians, and it mentions the Pope’s declaration in 1302 “that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.” But, are Protestants immune to this concept? Acts 4:12 is referenced and we are asked what this text is saying and what we think it means. Would someone read Acts 4:12 loudly for the class?

NIV: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” (PS 118:22) Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.



MSG: By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the One you killed on a cross, the One God raised from the dead, by means of his name this man stands before you healthy and whole. Jesus is ‘the stone you masons threw out, which is now the cornerstone.’ Salvation comes no other way; no other name has been or will be given to us by which we can be saved, only this one.

The quarterly cautions against reading more into these texts than is actually written, but what does it mean...and how then can we explain texts like Zechariah 13:6 and Romans 2? What if I said, “Salvation from polio comes by no other name but Jonas Salk”? Why is that? Because he is the one who procured the remedy! Is it necessary for me to know Jonas Salk or have met him or have even heard of him...in order to benefit from what he achieved? Our salvation comes by no other name...because He is the one who achieved the remedy – the cure for our terminal condition...and He is the only one who could. He is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Did anyone read the analogy the lesson provided at the bottom of Sunday’s lesson? Someone please read the 4th and 5th paragraphs, start with the one beginning with “Imagine a man...” Any thoughts? Is this an accurate analogy?

Sunday’s lesson ends with a beautiful quote from the Desire of Ages that makes reference to the folks in Romans 2 we just discussed, but I am including a couple more paragraphs than what is in the quarterly:

“Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God,” p. 638.

Do these sound like unconscious victims of smoke inhalation? Or like folks who discern God’s character in the things He has made, and have cooperated with the promptings of the Holy Spirit to have their fearful and selfish characters transformed – as is evidenced in their “works”? I believe this is a more accurate description of how salvation can happen – for all of us. Many in non-heathen



“religious” or even Christian circles...are still ignorant and would do well to adopt this basic approach of worshipping the creator designer, and hearing “His voice speaking to them in nature.”

MONDAY

How Much Must One Know?

Interesting couple of paragraphs in Monday’s lesson. “Although the work of Christ provides the only means of salvation, some believe that explicit knowledge of Christ is not necessary in order for one to be saved. This does not imply that salvation is available apart from Christ but that God is able and willing to apply the merits of Christ’s work to whomever He wishes.” Is that true?! While this is the traditional way we have heard this taught, what does it mean? What are the merits of Christ’s work? It seems important that those be clearly defined:

- Living revelation of God’s character in order to win us back to trust and show us what the Law of Love looks like
- Defeated the infection of fear and selfishness in his humanity, thereby procuring a remedy for our terminal condition and offering an alternate outcome/trajectory
- Promised to reproduce everything Christ achieved via the power of the Holy Spirit...not in “whomever He wishes”, but in anyone who trusts and chooses and *cooperates* with that character-transforming power

“God ‘will repay each person according to what they have done.’ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” Romans 2:6-7.

What do these concepts mean? Is God going to make sure everyone gets every bad thing done to them that they have done to others? What about those being “given” eternal life...is this an arbitrary declaration?

Also in the Desire of Ages on page 239,

“Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have. Thus even the heathen who choose the right as far as they can distinguish it are in a more favorable condition than are those who have had great light, and profess to serve God, but who disregard the light, and by their daily life contradict their profession.” Churches are full of folks who have heard hundreds of sermons, who hear Scripture read publicly each week, but whose hearts and minds and lives and actions remain unchanged – perhaps because of what is being preached and what kind of God is being portrayed? Having a form of godliness but denying the power?



TUESDAY

Universalism and Pluralism

“Universalists” believe that in the end God is going to save all human beings, regardless of what they believed or even how they lived – because we are so closely related to God, we will all be saved no matter what. The quarterly also points out how one false doctrine of eternal torment leads to another false doctrine of universalism, because if “God so loved the world”, then how can anyone be lost, especially if being lost means eternal torment in hell? How could God burn someone He loves forever?! Obviously, because He loves them, he will only burn them for as long as they deserve. I kid. How does natural law explain why *not* saving the lost *is* the only and most loving thing God can do?

Related to universalism is “pluralism,” which is the belief that all religions are equally valid and lead equally to God and to salvation. So, no religion is inherently better than, or superior to, any other religion. For pluralists, the vast range of religious rituals and beliefs, symbols, and metaphors, are mere surface differences concealing a similar core of all religions. According to them, all faiths, at the core, teach basically the same thing – love for God/higher power, love for fellow human beings/golden rule, and hope for a blessed future life – so it would be very chauvinistic and arrogant to try to push Christian beliefs upon those who are members of non-Christian faiths.

What do you think about this philosophy that all religions teach basically the same concepts and are therefore all equally valid? If only we knew someone who could speak to this subject...if only we had a reference or a resource to go to that could tell us if *what* we believe really matters...oh wait. We do!

“You have power over what you believe, but what you believe has power over you!”

We have illustrated many times in this class how believing a lie literally changes us – neurologically, physiologically. Some of you may remember a story Dr. Jennings has told about attending a conference several years back at Harvard University called Spirituality in Medicine, where representatives of all religious backgrounds were allowed to speak on their spirituality and how it impacted their parishioners. At this conference a woman got up and extolled the virtues of her Wiccan faith – the pagan religion of white witchcraft – and apparently all 1,300+ folks in attendance broke out into massive applause of her and her Wiccan ways. Tim spoke at some point after her, and when he got to the podium he said something like, “While we absolutely want to support the freedom for anyone to believe as their conscience leads them to believe, but we should not confuse people’s freedom to believe whatever they want to believe...with the idea that all beliefs are equally healthy...they’re not!” An earnest belief that smoking helps you breathe easier...does not make it true.



Earnestness and sincerity do not make a misguided belief any more right or healthy. So believing in false God concepts, regardless of which specific denomination is responsible, is damaging, promotes fear, and destroys love. Belief in a loving, beneficent God is the only one shown to be healing and restorative to our minds and bodies. You can find a bunch more on this topic in both of Dr. Jennings' books, as well as in the "Healing the Mind" and "God and Your Brain" DVDs.

One other Desire of Ages quote that supports this concept:

"In all ages, philosophers and teachers have been presenting to the world theories by which to satisfy the soul's need. Every heathen nation has had its great teachers and religious systems offering some other means of redemption than Christ, turning the eyes of men away from the Father's face, and filling their hearts with fear of Him who has given them only blessing. The trend of their work is to rob God of that which is His own, both by creation and by redemption. And these false teachers rob man as well. Millions of human beings are bound down under false religions, in the bondage of slavish fear, of stolid indifference, toiling like beasts of burden, bereft of hope or joy or aspiration here, and with only a dull fear of the hereafter. It is the gospel of the grace of God alone that can uplift the soul. The contemplation of the love of God manifested in His Son will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else can. Christ came that He might re-create the image of God in man; and whoever turns men away from Christ is turning them away from the source of true development; he is defrauding them of the hope and purpose and glory of life. He is a thief and a robber," p. 239.

WEDNESDAY

Sinners in Need of Grace

This lesson begins by quoting John 3:17, which is part of a very familiar passage I will read in context:

"In the same way that Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up—and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son.

And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again (according to his original design). Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has



long since been under the death sentence without even knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him. This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work that it is."

What a loaded passage! Let's work through it...why didn't God send His Son into the world to condemn it?

- Being out of harmony with natural laws does not require external policing, condemnation, or punishment
- Our condition is not our fault – HIV-infected mom and dad have an HIV-infected baby...what did the baby do? Is the baby still terminal?
- Love, mercy, desire to be in relationship with us, heal us, set everything "right"

Why is anyone who trusts in Him acquitted...and why is anyone who refuses to trust Him already under the death sentence (or condemned) without even knowing it?

Why is anyone with pneumonia who refuses treatment and antibiotics already condemned without even knowing it? We are all born in sin, conceived in inequity...we are all born terminal. Anyone who refuses to trust God and take the healing remedy remains condemned – not by God, but by their original terminal condition.

The last part of this text really struck me, "Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work that it is." It says anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light...it does *not* say anyone who behaves perfectly or never makes a mistake or who never, like Paul, does the very thing they don't want to do and acts out of fear and selfishness. So while their performance is not perfect, they have moved from darkness to light, they have "crossed over" from death to life (John 5:24), and their *characters* are being perfected by first trusting in God and then by working and living in truth and reality – natural laws, foundational design protocols are the basis for how reality even works!

There is a sobering quote at the bottom of Wednesday's lesson from *the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9:



“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to *show forth His glory*. (What is His glory?) The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of...what? God’s might and power? God’s judgment? God’s destruction of the wicked? No...the final and full display of the love of God.”

What “church” do you believe Ms. White is talking about here? Is she pointing to a specific denomination? And what an incredible responsibility...and opportunity. What kind of job are we doing at showing forth his glory/His character...and making manifest to the universe the final and full display of God’s love?

THURSDAY

The Mission Call

I looked up the 1 Corinthians text referenced in Thursday’s lesson, and the subtitle read “Paul’s Use of his Freedom”, which I thought was neat. 1 Cor 9:19-23 in MSG reads:

“¹⁹ Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. ²¹ To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³ I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

Wow. What an amazing way to use his freedom! What sort of reaction might he receive from a church board today for employing these methods? Would they be heartily endorsed and supported?

The first paragraph reads, “The Lord of missions, in His wisdom, chose to work through humans to bring the message of forgiveness and salvation to the world. God chose men and women, despite their weaknesses (or *because* of them), to work together with the Holy Spirit and the angels. Why?”

The lesson then goes on to highlight the progression from Israel being a steady light to other nations in OT times, to the salt methodology of the NT where His followers were commissioned to “go into all



the world and make disciples”. How extensive was “the whole world” for the first Christians? Within a few years of the crucifixion, they had reached modern-day Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy. There is evidence that they propagated the gospel as far as southern Russia (ancient Scythia) in the north, Ethiopia in the south, India in the east, and Spain in the west...which is mind-boggling to me. If the first church was so keenly aware of the worldwide extent of its mission back then, how much more so should we be today?

Doesn't “the whole world” sometimes sound rather daunting and overwhelmingly big? One of the founders of our church has this to say about your “mission field”:

“Do not pass by the little things, and look for a large work. You might do successfully the small work, but fail utterly in attempting a large work, and fall into discouragement. Take hold wherever you see that there is work to be done. Whether you are rich or poor, great or humble, God calls you into active service for Him. It will be by doing with your might what your hands find to do that you will develop talent and aptitude for the work. And it is by neglecting your daily opportunities that you become fruitless and withered. This is why there are so many fruitless trees in the garden of the Lord. The Lord desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use. He does not supernaturally endow us with the qualifications we lack; but while we use that which we have, He will work with us to increase and strengthen every faculty. By every wholehearted, earnest sacrifice for the Master's service, our powers will increase. We need not go to heathen lands, or even leave the narrow circle of the home, if it is there that our duty lies, in order to work for Christ. We can do this in the home circle, in the church, among those with whom we associate, and with whom we do business.” Christian Service 103

The quarterly asks this rather thought-provoking discussion question:

“If people can be saved without ever having heard the gospel, what's the point of risking life and limb in order to spread it to them?”

Is the command to “go” for the benefit of those going...or for those being reached? What impact or difference does it make in your life when you witness or share your faith? Can you truly be Christ-like...and not share your faith? What about the practical impact that can be made on a person's life who hears the truth about God's character of love, perhaps for the first time?

It also goes through some common human shortcomings and obstacles that have obscured some of our mission success stories, including:

- Poor planning for outreach, inadequate understanding of the task;



- Narrow focus on mission only as education, health care, disaster relief, and development, which overshadow preaching the gospel...can't all those things be considered preaching the gospel? In fact, can narrowly focus on those things with a servant mindset...without preaching the gospel?
- Underfunding and understaffing by the sending organizations;
- Missionaries unsuited to the task;
- Nations that forbid the preaching of the gospel.