

## No Punishment For Sin?

I've heard these questions more than once ... "If God will be saving ALL mankind, will the wicked go unpunished? What is the advantage to believing, if everyone will be saved?"

I am a "Biblical Universalist!" Many who are universalists do not believe the Bible is the Word of God. They believe that God will save all because they cannot fathom Him doing otherwise. They reason that God would not cast souls into hell forever.

But I am a "Biblical Universalist!" I believe the Bible is 100% the infallible, perfect Word of God. As a matter of fact, it is because of a study of the Bible that I have come to see God's plan to ultimately save ALL of mankind.

### WHAT ABOUT PUNISHMENT FOR SIN?

A Biblical Universalist does not believe sin goes unnoticed by God. People often criticize our conclusion (that God will ultimately save all) without understanding exactly why we believe the conclusion to be true. What is worse, many will not even listen once they understand our belief that God will one day save all.

God does address sin. We who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour, know that our sin was addressed by the work of Christ upon the Cross. In Christ, we are now new creations. As was the case with Abraham, we believe and it is credited to us as righteousness. We are justified (found innocent) before God, not because of anything we have done but because of the work of Christ.

Not all followers of Christ believed by faith. Thomas would not believe as did the others until he **SAW** the risen Christ for himself. Paul did not believe until he **SAW** the risen Christ on the road to Damascus.

"Happy are those who are not perceiving and believe." (John 20:29) But even Scripture shows us there are those who do not believe until they see (Thomas and Paul). While we within the Body of Christ believe in this age by faith, the many others who do not believe in this age will one day find salvation (see 1 Corinthians 15), after they have experienced the second death.

In other words, it is the work of Christ upon the Cross that has defeated sin and delivered salvation to mankind. And here is the best part ... his work will one day be effective upon ALL creation. Any who would say that "Biblical Universalism" minimizes the need for Christ is wrong! Seeing God's plan, in Scripture, to one day save all of mankind recognizes the fullness of what Christ has accomplished.

## **SO WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF BELIEVING IN THIS LIFETIME?**

The living God is the Saviour of all mankind, **especially** of believers (1 Timothy 4:10). Notice this passage does not say “exclusively” of believers, but **especially** of believers. Believers are not the **only** group that will be saved, for God is the Saviour of **all** mankind. But believers are **especial** in some way.

1. The non-Believer will experience the second death (the lake of fire). They forfeit “eonian” life. This should not be translated “eternal” life, and those Bible versions that make this mistake hide the truth. The truth is that non-Believers forfeit “eonian” life (life in the eons, or ages, to come), but they will finally find salvation at the end of the ages (see 1 Corinthians 15).
2. The Believer will enjoy life during the final eons, while the non-Believer is experiencing the second death. This may be a long time, and life during this time will be very much worth living.
3. We who believe enjoy, throughout this present lifetime, the **expectation** of the life to come. Even when we encounter the worst of experiences, this **expectation** cannot be taken from us.
4. As Believers we are God’s chosen witnesses (Ambassadors) during this lifetime (2 Corinthians 5:20). This is why He has called us into the “ecclesia” (often translated “church”). What a wonderful joy, not only to know God’s plan for the ages, but to be able to share it as His Ambassadors.

## **PUNISHMENT ... OR CORRECTION?**

The heart of the problem is this. Most churches teach “eternal punishment” for those that do not believe in this lifetime. A proper translation of God’s Word from the original languages teaches “eonian chastisement” or “age-abiding correction.” It is not destructive punishment. It is constructive discipline, leading toward salvation.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 15**

While many passages can be found in Scripture pointing to the ultimate salvation of all, the real key is 1 Corinthians 15. This is the climax of God’s revelation. When the ages have ended, and when God has accomplished His will and His purposes through the ages:

- **ALL** will then be subjected to Christ (v 28)
- Christ will then give up the kingdom to God (v 24)
- All sovereignty, authority and power will be nullified (v 24)
- Death will be abolished (v 27) – [Remember, the lake of fire is the second “death”]
- God will then become All in all (What an ending to the story!)

Yes, sin and wickedness are dealt with ... and totally defeated. Sin and wickedness are not incurable. Through the love and wisdom and power of God, He is moving history toward a climax, when **ALL** mankind is reconciled to Him, and when He becomes All in all. This is the correct gospel!

- Bob Evelyn -