

that God does not receive us on the basis of our faces. God will not receive us on the basis of race. Nor will He do so on the basis of worldly position. Thayer's Lexicon says that this word suggests the custom of judging between men of high birth and low birth, between rich men and poor men. According to him the judge "prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, high-born, or powerful, to another who is destitute of such gifts" (cf. Deut. 10: 17f.).

But God is no such Judge. His judgment will be not on the basis of your own achievements. It will be on the question, "What did you do with Jesus?" Those who have trusted in Him have already been judged in His death and resurrection. But those who have not will receive the treasured-up wrath of God.

So we ask again, "What will you

say in the judgment?" The Bible says that there every mouth will be stopped. There will be no extenuating circumstances for you to plead. Nor will there be higher courts to which you can appeal. God's judgment will be just and final. Day by day your deeds are being written into the record, not for justification but for condemnation. Your only hope in that hour is Jesus.

That is the meaning of the gospel. It is the good news of what God has done to enable you to stand before Him blameless and justified. So once again we see the gospel of God's wrath and righteousness. His wrath is against what you do in defiance of Him. His righteousness is what God does when you submit to Him. What will you answer in the judgment? Only two answers may be given. That you rejected Jesus or that you trusted in Jesus. Only you can give the answer. Which shall it be?

ARE THE HEATHEN LOST?

October 25, 1959

"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."—Romans 2:12

How many times have you either asked, or have been asked, "If the heathen never hears of Christ, will he be lost?" Such an inquiry questions both the justice and mercy of God. It implies that if we answer affirmatively God is unmerciful and unjust to condemn the heathen without a chance to hear the gospel of salvation. Furthermore if we answer negatively we declare God unjust and unmerciful because He discriminates between the heathen and those who live under the full light of the Christian revelation. It also questions the whole of the missionary movement. For if the heathen is not lost if he never hears of Jesus, then, instead of

preaching the gospel to him, we should endeavor to keep it from him. For if he hears of Jesus and then rejects Him to his soul's damnation, then we have condemned him by telling him of Jesus. Furthermore we should endeavor to keep our own children in spiritual ignorance, thereby insuring their salvation.

All of this is beside the point. It contradicts every word of the Bible. It is simply silly and sentimental reasoning bereft of any scriptural basis. Yes, outside of Jesus Christ, all men, the heathen as well as the spiritually enlightened person, are lost. "For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:11f.). This is the

burden of Paul's argument in the opening chapters of Romans. So, in this light, let us consider, first, the plight of the heathen; second, the position of the Jew; third, the requirement of God.

First, note the plight of the heathen. We have seen in Romans 1 that God has revealed Himself to the heathen as a group through nature. Also we noted that the heathen is lost because he fails to live up to the knowledge of God which he was. Paul now applies this principle to the individual.

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (vv. 14f.). Here then we see that while the heathen does not have God's law written on sheets of paper in the Bible, he does have a threefold law of God as seen in his conduct, conscience, and mental reasoning.

Even heathen nations have laws of conduct which approximate those written in the Bible. This does not mean that the Bible is derived simply from the accumulated knowledge of ancient peoples. What it does mean is that the same God who revealed Himself in written tables of stone also revealed Himself in the consciences and minds of all men. Historically the difference is between those who have received a full revelation and those who rejected the revelation which they received.

When this is reduced to the level of the individual we find a heathen man with a limited knowledge of God. His response to this knowledge is seen in his conduct. His conscience tells him to do right. But his reason tells him what is right. Since his reason is perverted by his rebellion against God, his conscience is violated as he follows the law of the flesh rather than the law of the spirit.

Another question often heard is "If

the heathen does the best that he knows will he be saved?" The answer is "Yes." But we hasten to add that because of his perverted nature he does not do the best that he knows. This is true of all men, whether they live in so-called heathen or so-called Christian lands. The trouble is that he does not live up to the light that he has.

But Paul adds in verse 16 that "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Yes, all men will be judged in the light of Jesus Christ according to the gospel. It will be a just judgment in the light of the knowledge of God against which we have sinned. Which leads us to suggest

Second, consider the position of the Jew. As elsewhere in Romans the Jew corresponds to those who because of the accident of birth enjoy a greater knowledge of God, yet reject Christ the supreme expression of God's revelation. This picture includes the majority of unsaved people who listen to this message. What does Paul say about you?

Paul says that you "rest in the law, and make thy boast of God" (v. 17). The picture is that of blind and mechanical reliance upon God's law as found in the Bible. Or in your case because you happen to live in a land where you have the Bible and the advantages of a civilization which it has produced, you boast of a special relation with God. Knowing the will of God, you assume the right to be the judge of the heathen (v. 18). You pose as a guide to the blind and as a light to those in heathen darkness (v. 19). You set yourself up as their teacher in spiritual things (v. 20).

Now Paul reminds you in verses 21-23 that while you assume this superior position, you are guilty of the same sins committed by the heathen. And what is worse your own sins cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the heathen (v. 24).

This condemnation is upon the so-

called Christian nations of the world. History records the most bestial of atrocities inflicted upon the heathen peoples by their so-called Christian conquerors. The modern uprising of the peoples of Asia and Africa is largely due to the practices of political and economic exploitation inflicted upon them by peoples who travel under the banner of Christ. Missionaries tell us that one of the greatest obstacles which they must overcome in reaching the heathen with the gospel is the un-Christian practices of nominally Christian people, both tourists and business travelers. American movies and literature give so distorted a picture of our life, which the heathen regards as typically Christian, as to blaspheme the name of God among them.

So our superior knowledge of God becomes not merely a privilege, but an obligation. This is true of the individual as well as of the nations. The heathen is lost because he does not live up to his knowledge of God. How much more is this true of those who possess the superior revelation of God in Christ Jesus. And you shall be judged of God in the light of your knowledge of Him.

We said a moment ago that God's judgment of the heathen will be just. It is also true of those of you who regard yourselves as in a more fortunate position. And your judgment will be greater than that of the heathen. He will be judged and condemned in the light of his dim knowledge of God. You will be judged and condemned in the light of your full knowledge of God in Christ. Every time that you hear a sermon and reject Christ the degree of your judgment is increased. The Bible teaches degrees of punishment in Hell (Luke 12:47). The degree of punish-

ment for you who have a full light of God's revelation, and reject it, will be greater than that of the heathen who rejects the light that he has. Both will be in Hell, but there are degrees of punishment there.

So your question should not be "Are the heathen lost?" Rather it should be "Am I Saved?"

A young man once asked Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "Will the heathen be lost if he does not hear the gospel?" Mr. Spurgeon replied, "The question is are we truly saved if we do not preach the gospel to him?"

Third, note the requirement of God. Paul closes Romans 2 by referring to circumcision (vv. 25-27). By it the Jew regarded himself as a descendent of Abraham and so in the family of God. But Paul said that the outward rite of circumcision avails nothing. The important thing is circumcision of the heart. "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (v. 29). Long before Paul the same truth was uttered by John the Baptist. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth works meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:7-9).

In short, neither by the accident of physical birth nor of outward rites and ceremonies can you claim to be a child of God. You are not a Christian simply because you were born in a so-called Christian nation. Nor because your parents are Christians. Neither because you grew up in a home where the Bible was always on the living room table. Nor because as an infant you were Christened as an act of your parents' dedi-

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