

The Old Paths

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“Those The Gospel Will Not Reach”

Jarrod Jacobs

One of the ways we spread the gospel is through what is sometimes called “door-knocking.” In other words, loving Christians take the initiative to make a door-to-door effort to invite lost souls to worship services and/or to have a Bible study. (I simply call this “walking” because that is what we do — walk through a neighborhood to find the good and honest hearts that will accept the gospel message, Lk. 8:15.) This is not an out-moded or out-dated practice. This has always been and continues to be one productive way to spread the gospel in any town. The gospel can call folks “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Pet. 2:9); but how can folks be called into the light if they don’t even know they are in the dark? Therefore, there is a need for going to lost souls and trying to reach them while there is still time (Jn. 9:4; II Cor. 6:2).

One Section Of Town Ignored

After reading the above, would it surprise some to know that I recently passed a section of Owensboro in which I was (and still am) confident the gospel would have no effect? Some might hear pessimism in those words, but I assure you I am not pessimistic. There are places in Owensboro wherein the gospel would have absolutely no effect, no matter how hard you try. I

saw one such section of town and realized no one was going to listen to me. So, ***I passed them by*** in order to find folks that I thought would hear the gospel.

Have I shocked anyone with my decision? Some may wonder how I could know for certain that a certain group of people would not listen to the gospel message. Didn’t Jesus say that the gospel needs to go to all? He certainly did (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; II Tim. 2:2)! Therefore, how could I just ignore a certain section of town when the gospel needs to go to all people?

Has anyone figured out where this section of town is and/or why I skipped it? (Hint: Once we know the “where” we will understand the “why”)? The answer: I was passing by the ***cemetery!*** This is one section of town where the gospel will not reach anyone! The souls of the “residents” there have already passed on (Ecc. 12:7; Lk. 16:19-31), and all that remains is the “shell” or corpse which we bury (Jas. 2:26).

Some Whom The Gospel Will Not Reach

In contemplating the fact that the cemetery is a place where the “residents” cannot hear the gospel, my mind returned to the words of Scripture where Jesus basically said that there were some still alive upon earth whom the gospel could not reach. This is because those folks refused to listen! Jesus said, “*For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time*

they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matt. 13:15).

Yes, those who have left this world cannot be reached with the gospel. Sadly, some have died without Christ and are lost (Jn. 8:24; II Thess. 1:6-9). At the same time, it is no less a tragedy when we find those still living who refuse the gospel. In their case, the gospel cannot reach them, either! This is not due to a lack of power in the gospel (Rom. 1:16), but it is because those folks simply choose not to listen.

Jesus met such people while He was upon the earth (Matt. 13:15). Therefore, when we meet folks who refuse the gospel message today, let us not be discouraged, but realize that we are just experiencing the same things Jesus did (cf. Jn. 15:18-20). It does not make us happy when people refuse the gospel, but we must also understand that all we can do is spread the gospel (I Cor. 3:6) and not lose heart (Gal. 6:9). God is the One who gives the increase (Isa. 55:11)!

Let Us Listen To And Obey The Gospel

Friends, the gospel has as much power today as it has ever had (Rom. 1:16). It will change us, and make us a better people. Obedience to the gospel of Christ will save (I Cor. 1:18, 15:1-2). Yet, this will only happen when we as God’s creation LISTEN to and OBEY what He has said! Isn’t it something that we are the only ones of God’s creation that can tell God “No”? The sun and moon cannot refuse to work! The bees cannot refuse to buzz, the fish cannot refuse to swim; yet man can deny God and defy His will!! However, if we do refuse to listen to the gospel, and refuse to obey what the Lord said, then

there are consequences we must face. In fact, if we refuse God's word, we are no different than those in the cemetery. This is because we, like them, are unreachable with the gospel!

Are We "Unreachable"?

Perhaps those who refuse the gospel are worse than those in the cemetery, for those already dead cannot choose anything more. The living still have the opportunity, but we will suffer because we have refused to change our sinful ways and to follow the Lord! Long ago, folks were reminded, *"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 10:28-31).

Another way we become "unreachable" is when we neglect God's word because we want to fulfill our selfish interests! Sometimes, our selfish interests may seem "religious" or "spiritual," but if it is not what God authorized, then we are still neglecting the truth so we can do what we want (Matt. 7:21-23)! An example of this is when Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and said, *"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition"* (Matt. 15:6; Mk. 7:13). It was not a matter of people not believing in the existence of God. What had happened was that these people preferred to follow their own traditions in-

stead of following God's will. They told God "no." The end result is serious — it is the loss of salvation!

Conclusion

Let us be mindful of the dangers of being unreachable with the gospel (II Thess. 1:6-9). We cannot change the spiritual destiny of those who have passed from this life (Lk. 16:26). However, we who are alive right now may still have the chance to change if we will listen to God, repent of our sins, and obey His word (Acts 17:30; I Pet. 3:9; Heb. 5:9; Acts 22:16; Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 4:8). This is not to be taken lightly, nor is this always the "easy" way, however, it is the best thing to do!

Let us think seriously about our spiritual condition before God. Do we know some folks who might be "unreachable"? Have we become "unreachable" ourselves? Either way, repentance is needed, for only when we are reached with the gospel do we have the ability to become His children and look forward to Heaven when this life is over!

Whatever we do, let us make sure our eyes, ears, and hearts are opened to God's word. This will result in many blessings we can enjoy in this life (Eph. 1:3), as well as blessings to come in Heaven (Rev. 22:14).

Anything Strange About The Following Scene?

Jarrod Jacobs

Picture a lovely young girl and a young man. Both are good-looking people, healthy and clean-cut. Both are naked, seeing that he has nothing to cover himself except a small pair of shorts. She has nothing to cover herself except a string bikini (Gen. 3:7, 10). These two go to the local swimming pool with their peers who are similarly undressed. While talking with their friends, these two pause to open a bag they brought and take out their Bibles to read. Their friends look at them in confusion and walk away as the two suggest that they all take turns reading the Bible together. The two shrug their shoulders as the boy says, "I guess not everyone is interested in being Christians like we are."

Friends, what would you think of two people inadequately clothed sitting among others similarly undressed? Would you call such folks Christians? Would the presence of a Bible make them look like Christians, or like hypocrites? You know the answer to this. As the temperatures warm up, let us not forget who we are when among peers or by ourselves (Matt. 5:16; I Pet. 3:3-5).

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"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)