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The Worst Position in the World

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If you were to ask someone not a Christian, “Must a person be a member of the Church of Christ to be Saved?”; “Are there Christians in other Denominations?”; “Will everyone with religious zeal and good morals be saved?”, you might anger some of your family or dearest friends.

One thing we would agree upon is **Romans 10:2,3**. “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God”. That passage explains why there are so many different religious bodies in the first place. People fail to respect and obey God’s righteousness and prefer to develop their own way to be right with God. Folks must understand there are not two right ways. One way is right and the other is wrong.

Consider this question from Jesus’ point of view in **Matthew 7:21-23**. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”. Jesus plainly rebukes and condemns those who believe their sincerity and their own way of righteousness will be acceptable to God.

When you add the above passages with **Matthew 16:18**, Jesus promised to build one church of which He is the head and of which there is only one (**Eph 1:22,23; 4:4**). It was Jesus who rebuked the Pharisees who were holding to the traditions of men rather than the righteousness of God. He told the multitude, “Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (**Matthew 15:13,14**). Jesus does not give acceptance or approved to another righteousness or church which He had no part in establishing. The seed, the gospel, the righteousness of God (**Rom 1:16,17**), if planted in the heart of man will produce nothing more, nothing less than what God intended - A Christian. The seed produces after its kind. And only those who maintain their faithfulness to God, who are born of that seed, will live forever (**1 Pet 1:23-25**).

God has given us a standard of righteousness to follow, and “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son” (**3 Jn 9**). The **worst position in the world** is outside the fellowship of God. What God has given every man is the freedom to choose His righteousness or their own. To avoid burning in hell, and dwell eternally in heaven, choose to follow God’s righteousness...

Promises God Never Made

Devan Harber

Christian, stop making promises for God.

I know I’m not the only one who has heard this statement, and ones very similar, “It’s all going to work out / God’s going to take care of that / God’s going to heal you...” How interesting, you know what God is going to do... I don’t. Maybe they are better in tune with the Divine, or perhaps more presumptuous.

I think we must be careful making promises for God that He never said He would fulfill. Without question there are promises God has made that He will keep! Promises of salvation, deliverance, help, etc. — But, we must ask, “from what?” Sin. The promises God made are spiritual in implication and application. God promised to *save* you from your sin (Eph. 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved”). God promised to *deliver* you from your sin (like Paul, II Tim. 4:18, delivered “from every evil work,” ultimately through the resurrection). God promised to *help* you in dealing with your weaknesses towards sin (I Cor. 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you... But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”). You see God has made specific *spiritual* promises.

There have been many people lose their faith over a misunderstanding of this issue. Some caring Christian wrote them a check of faith, and when God didn't cash it, it devastated them. This is a danger in the health and wealth gospel. “You just serve the Lord and He is going to make you healthy and wealthy and your life will be on top of the clouds from now on!” How does that harmonize with Paul's own life, much less his teachings (see II Cor. 11:22-33: suffering for Christ; 12:7-10: the “thorn in the flesh”; all of II Tim. 2-3 where Paul speaks of “enduring” (3x), and “suffering” — and yes, Paul says he “was delivered out of them all,” (3:11), but he then acknowledges “all who desire to live godly... will suffer persecution.” Yet, he trusted he would be delivered eternally and spiritually). What happens to this person who has shallow faith, when they are not “miraculously” healed from their cancer? They lose all confidence in God; their faith is made shipwreck. But, God never promised to heal you from cancer, or heart disease, or bad eye-sight for that matter. He promised to heal you of your sin.

Where faith must enter this discussion is in the understanding, I believe God is fully capable of making this situation right; if not temporally, here and now, certainly eternally, there and then. The example of Paul would suffice for this point. God allowed him to endure and suffer hardship — but Paul *knew* God *could* make it good, and had complete confidence that God *would* make it good (see Phil. 1:20-26: “To live is Christ, to die is gain”; Rom. 8:31-39: “Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ...”; II Tim. 1:8-12, especially v. 12, “For this reason I also *suffer these things*; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day”).

The next time you are going through some horrible circumstance, don't let a well-meaning Christian persuade you to believe a promise God never made. There is a very real sense in which it may not be okay *physically* (despite the repeated motto, “It will all be okay”); it may not be, but physically it was never promised to be. We live in a broken world and sometimes the brokenness follows us from birth to the grave. But... there is a Redeemer, Jesus God's own Son. He *has* promised to buy us out of the sin-sick suffering and take us home to be with Him. One day, it will truly be okay — that's the promise God made.