

## SINCERITY WILL NOT SAVE, SAY THE APOSTLES

Jesus said he was the only way to Heaven and his real sheep know him just like a sheep following the man they trust. You need to know of Jesus and believe to be saved. The notion of pagans being Christians and not knowing it is out.

Theologian Charles Hodge says that: "necessity of a knowledge of the gospel is expressly asserted in the Scriptures. Our Lord not only declares that no man can come unto the Father, but by Him; that no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him; but He says expressly, "He that believeth not, shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 18.) But faith without knowledge is impossible. The Apostle John says, "He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (1 John v. 12.) The knowledge of Christ is not only the condition of life, but it is life; and without that knowledge, the life in question cannot exist. Him to know is life eternal. Paul, therefore, said, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. iii. 8.) Christ is not only the giver, but the object of life. Those exercises which are the manifestations of spiritual life terminate on Him; without the knowledge of Him, therefore, there can be no such exercises; as without the knowledge of God there can be no religion. It is consequently, as the Apostle teaches, through the knowledge of Christ, that God "hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter i. 3.) To be without Christ is to be without hope, and without God. (Eph. ii. 12.) The Apostle Paul, while asserting the general vocation of men, saying, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved;" immediately adds, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 14.) Invocation implies faith; faith implies knowledge; knowledge implies objective teaching. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Verse 17.) There is no faith, therefore, where the gospel is not heard; and where there is no faith, there is no salvation. This is indeed an awful doctrine. But are not the words of our Lord also awful, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"? (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) Is not the fact awful which stares every man in the face, that the great majority even of those who hear the gospel reject its offers of mercy?" Systematic Theology, Volume 2. See page 622.

The evidence indicates that the early Church universally rejected with horror the idea of anybody who was not a born-again Christian being saved. Salvation was activated at conversion even before Church membership. This makes it plausible that when the Bible warns that those who do not believe in Christ will not be saved that it means just that. There is no evidence for a non-literal interpretation so it is unjustified. Christians may reject the non-literal interpretation but that is because the literal one is unpalatable and philosophically unsound. But their motives are dishonest and unjust for their book often diverts from logic.

Peter "[because he was] filled with [and controlled by] the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8 AB) said concerning Jesus, "And there is salvation in and through no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by and in which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 AB). The name of Jesus saves and it can only do that if you know of it and believe in it. The name of Jesus given among men means the known name. A name exists only among those who use names. Were it sincerity that we were saved through Jesus, Peter would have said that we were saved by Jesus and not the name of Jesus. The name expression emphasises that it is Jesus and knowing about him and who he is that saves.

When Peter told the Jews and pagans on Pentecost that they had to repent and be baptised in the name of the Saviour – implying that they had to know about Jesus – to be saved he was telling them that sincerity was not enough. Many of them would have thought they were right with the divine. They too were told to join forces with Jesus to be saved so they were not saved and had to repent of their sins all over again because any past repentance did them no good for they had the wrong gods or did not know Christ.

The Christian faith calls itself the one, true Church. Church means called out assembly. It is an assembly of faith. "Whatever is not from [Christian] faith is sin" says Romans 14:23. Since sin blocks you from entering Heaven there is no salvation outside the faith community. It is said that the best way to state this teaching is that if you are not connected to Christ in the way he asks then you will not be saved.

Paul said that if we are wrong to think that Jesus rose from the grave then we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). This proves that believing you are forgiven is not enough according to the Christian religion. Sincerity will not save.

St Paul stated that nobody speaking by the Spirit of God could curse Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:3). He means that nobody could seriously think that Jesus was bad if the Holy Spirit was in him or her. If you hate Jesus then you intend all your doctrines to be opposed to him even those that agree with him for you are making them stand without his authority and to spite him. Therefore, you are cursing Jesus in effect whenever you do or think anything religious. If the Spirit cannot make

such a one curse Jesus then it cannot have any influence on a non-Christian or anti-Christ cult at all. And grace is necessary for salvation.

St Paul said that prophesying and the gift of being able to teach the gospel and testify to it to the people was the best gift. That implies that healing and miracles are inferior. So even if people do no harm and pray to whatever god they believe in, it is best for them to be preached to because it is best for the gospel to be taught. Their sincerity and harmlessness is not good enough.

Philippians 3:3-11 is a powerful testament to the apostolic doctrine that sincerity was no use. Paul said that he was blameless and sincere as a Jew but that was no use and was really rubbish. He did not please God until he accepted Christ.

The apostles would not have suffered to deliver a gospel message to all people if they thought that sincerity is all that is required. Paul said that he was ruined if he did not preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 8:16). So he had to do it himself instead of getting others to do it in his place for he had to do it with them so that there would be one more to save souls.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 we read that anybody who does not see that the gospel is true will perish and is influenced by the Devil. So anybody that does not believe does not want to believe and will be lost forever for that.

The Bible never says that anybody entered Heaven even in the Old Testament without faith in Christ. Jesus said that Abraham and David were saved but he said that they foresaw him.

Acts 10:2, 22 allegedly says that the Godfearer, Cornelius, was righteous before he converted to Christianity implying that Christians can believe that some people are saved without an explicit faith in Jesus. Cornelius could give alms and pray and fear God and still be an unsaved sinner in verse 2. The New Testament says that these things never prove that one is righteous before God. Luke denigrated human works in the Gospel so he did not intend to infer that Cornelius was accepted by God. Cornelius was not saved until he believed the gospel (11:14). Acts merely reports what some people said about Cornelius in verse 22.

In the context of finding God for salvation, Acts 17:27 says that God is not far from the pagans and Christians for he is everywhere. This is not a hint that sincere pagans will be saved because it could be that they only come to God when they respond to the gospel. God is near to help them believe if they will hear it and turn to him. In this chapter, see verses 30,31. Paul says that God says he overlooked the ignorance of the past but now things are different and all men must repent and be ready to face Jesus Christ the judge. This warns that even if people were saved before Christ without knowing him that is not the case any more (page 38, God That's Not Fair!). The Bible never hints that sincere goodness will save one without consciously believing in Christ (page 38, *ibid*). Some say the verses indicate not that God cares about what we believe but that before Christ he just forgets the sins that have been committed but won't anymore. But it makes no sense to say that God would ignore sins. The context says the sins are religious offences of idol worship. So God ignored ignorant idol worshippers in the past but now that Jesus has come he will not any more. This is another way of saying he ignored sincere people in the wrong religion then but not anymore.

Acts 17:30 says that God overlooked the sins of the ignorant in the past but now he does not and wants everybody to repent for Jesus will judge. That only implies that he let the sins caused by ignorance off and is not a hint that they will be saved for they had plenty of other sins.

[Paul told the Athenians that when they worshiped what they called the unknown God they were adoring his God implying that when they honoured the other gods that they didn't contact him (Acts 17:23).

Some critics say:

Acts 17:22-31 says Paul said that you can be an educated pagan and innocent before God of having wrong ideas about the divine. Paul's Romans 1 is clear that nobody has an excuse at all for not knowing God for he makes his reality plain to them. The following from Acts 17 is even more telling as a fabrication put into Paul's mouth, "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

End of critics view.

This contradiction would be very serious for there is no compromise between saying nobody but a Jew/Christian knows God and then saying that an educated pagan might.

The answer is that Romans is saying nobody has an excuse for not knowing God as in having a relationship. Acts is saying smart people know of there being a God. Naturally any worship not given to God is no good and is an abomination simply

because it flows from the person at some level not wanting the real God or to give him any real love. Nobody can go to Heaven the place of relationship with God unless they drop idols.]

Ephesians 5:8-14 tells us that the Ephesians were in darkness once and are in the light now and because they are in the light they have the effects of the light which are goodness and having the truth. When people read this they assume the apostle is just saying that they had only error before and that is what he means by darkness. But he said the truth was an effect of the light and not the light itself so the light is the grace of God that draws one to the truth and makes one holy. He was saying that the Ephesians were in the darkness of being totally cut off from God. The sincerity they had then could not save them and there was nothing to praise in that sincerity. They were in darkness not in twilight or dusk so there was no light.

Romans 3 describes all humankind as useless and sinful. They may do good but it is done with a bad or selfish motive so it is not good from God's perspective. Paul told the converts that they were not saved but dead in sin until they converted to Christianity so this denies that people who sincerely thought they were saved by God before conversion to Christ were really saved and so it says sincerity is insufficient.

Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. This is said in the context that if anybody comes to God without believing in him and that he rewards and punishes they will not be accepted. This means that whoever has no belief in what God has revealed will not be saved for God is not happy with them. If faith is the first or foundational requirement then that means that sincerity is not enough. To sincerely not trust God and to have no faith in him will prevent salvation. If that is the case then why can't there be other doctrines that are necessary for salvation? Verse 1 makes it clear that faith is trusting that what is hoped for will come. Then it says that this faith makes you perceive that God made all things. This tells us that faith is not just trusting in a God that may exist but is trusting in the doctrines God has revealed. It commends Abel's faith and says that faith was Cain's failure. All of us trust in the God that may exist if he exists but this tells us that the if must be dropped. It is referring to dogmatic trust. Hebrews stands as proof that any other texts that seem to say sincerity is not enough probably are saying that. It commends Abraham's faith when he was willing to slaughter Isaac his son. He trusted in God's command that this was the right thing to do even though God had promised him that he would make a great nation out of Isaac. Hebrews is telling us that we have a duty to believe in the gospel and are immoral if we do not. We cannot like such bigotry.

1 Peter 4:18 says that even the righteous, meaning the Christians who have God working in their lives, are scarcely saved for God judges sinners. That indicates that outside the Church there is strictly no salvation even if you have a very easy religion that you sincerely believe in for it wouldn't be harder for the people of God than anybody else.

1 John 4 tells us that anybody who is born into God's family loves others implying that he who is not born does not. It says that anybody who does not love does not know God for God is love. The Church says it means know God as a friend. But it can mean simply know. It probably does when the friendship bit was not expressed. What the chapter is really saying is that you have to be a believer and a Christian to love and that if you are not you don't love or know what love is. Any love you have when you are not is just an unacceptable counterfeit however closely it matches the real thing.

1 John 3 states that only when our love is not just talk but something active can we be certain that we are children of the truth. It says we know God lives in us by the Spirit he has given us. (Our love involves advancing the revelation that God gave most of all for there is no true love without it so what we are told is that we can learn the truth and if we err its our own fault. It says we know we have the Spirit if we feel inclined to love and keep the commandments.) The insinuation then is that only you yourself can know if you really have an inclination to keep the commandments. Given that since Adam, man prefers to defy God and be a good-living hypocrite it could not be any other way for you can't know anybody else's soul. So you cannot tell by others if they are true Christians. You can only speak for yourself. So you are more sure of yourself than other Christians and are more sure other Christians are saved than non-Christians meaning that Christianity urges you to be suspicious of the good works of pagans and to be more inspired by those of Christians. You would be forbidden to stress the goodness in the unbelievers to make them feel good about themselves which is an essential if you want to convert them. Obviously God would rather have them turned off the gospel than this meaning he is able and willing to damn them for not knowing the good news of Jesus Christ. 1 John 3 also tells us that the commandments of God that we must follow if we are to know we have the Spirit in us and are right with God are: Believe in Jesus and love one another. Notice how the interpretation that Christians have that believe means believe and practice the belief being considered as one unit is eliminated for the word belief here for it is distinguished from love in this case. When God commands us to believe on pain of sin that clearly implies that he does not accept that we have the right to change our mind about Jesus or disagree. To damn people for losing their belief and accepting people who do not believe because they have never heard would be unjust discrimination. This indicates that we cannot know we are children of the truth and that the Spirit is in us unless we know the Christian gospel. A being commanding you what to believe is not a good being. He should let you think what you like as long as you mean well and are careful. 1 John 3 shows only one thing, that the early Church felt the need to scare people and make them feel bad about thinking in any way different from the Church in order to get them to believe in its Jesus for the case for him and his claims was so bad that threats were their only hope.

The Handbook of Christian Apologetics says that sincerity is not enough and seven conditions must be fulfilled for it to suffice. The conditions are, sincerity, total commitment to the truth as an absolute – something that is right objectively, being open to truth, repentance for the love of God no matter how vaguely God is understood, faith in some holy being speaking to you through the conscience and reliance on the grace of God (page 326). My objection to this is that all sincerity would contain these things implicitly. For example, the Atheist who would love God and who does good will be saved by God despite rejecting belief in him for though he does not realise it he has a relationship with God. Another objection is the view that you need to hold that there is an objective truth. Some people really do think that there is no absolute truth and that reason is of no help though they live a normal life and are sincere about it so the Handbook is bigoted on this point.

The apostles clearly taught that hearing the word of God of the real Jesus is necessary for salvation.

Hebrews 11:35-39 speaks of the Jewish holy people who did heroic good works and who had amazing faith and even gave their lives for a blessed resurrection to be with God. Because they didn't know of Jesus this didn't happen. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- 38the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. 39These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Jesus and his apostles repeatedly stated that you have to know of Jesus to have any hope of salvation. To have a small or distorted knowledge of Jesus is as bad as following the wrong Jesus so it will not suffice. And then you have to proceed to spiritual knowledge – the sense that Jesus is in your soul giving you faith and hope and charity and that you are engaged in a personal relationship with him.