

Call to Obedience #410
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So That They Are Without Excuse

by Reimar Schultze

Today I shall set before you the thesis that no man standing before the judgment seat of Christ has a legitimate excuse for not having walked with God. Here are some common excuses of men that will not stand on Judgment Day: 1) "No one ever told me about Jesus;" 2) "I was told if I followed the golden rule I would go to heaven;" 3) "I never saw anyone who lived it." All of these and other excuses for any man living ungodly will be unacceptable in the end.

From the beginning of time, men have been able to live godly lives, even without having ever heard of Jesus. *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him (Gen. 5:24). ...Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9). ...Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God (James 2:23). Job...was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil (Job 1:1).* None of these men ever heard of the rebirth and they never heard the Gospel. They had neither the Old nor New Testament. As men walked with God *in days of old*, so they can do it *today* by virtue of what John calls the eternal gospel: *...Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Rev. 14:7).* Let me spell out now what the eternal gospel given to all men includes:

1. The Witness of Nature: *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; **so that they are without excuse** (Rom. 1:19-20).*

Here Paul talks about pagans (people who have not heard of Christ). He talks about those in wild jungles on the one hand, and about the intellectual pagans who teach in our universities on the other hand. God has shown every man that He is. For the English word *manifest* comes from the Greek word *phaneros* meaning *to shine*. The light of the knowledge of God, Paul says,

shines into everyone, so that no one has an excuse for not knowing God. This light is revealed in nature, and is both *seen* and *understood* by His creation. On this witness of nature David remarked: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world* (Ps. 19:1-4 NIV).

God has stamped His image upon everything He has made: on the atom, on our DNA, on everything in the earth, in the seas and in the heavens. Every day nature pours forth its message: there is a God. Creation is God's first evangelist. By virtue of its stunning beauty, incomprehensible complexity and seamless harmony, it is irrefutable. If it is ignored or rejected as being from God, if man does not bow in adoration and thanksgiving to his Maker, man's mind becomes twisted and his heart is plunged into darkness. As Paul continues: *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened* (Rom. 1:21).

Anyone who denies God's existence and rejects his innate knowledge of God and creation is lying to himself. He is suppressing the evidence and that is all he can do. He cannot destroy it for truth is indestructible. Therefore the psalmist said: *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...* (Ps. 14:1). All men are without excuse if they have not come to God by virtue of the evidence of nature. No one is born an atheist. From birth, every man's heart is designed to worship.

2. The Witness of the Law and Conscience: In addition to an innate knowledge of God, every man has also received a moral compass at birth: the law written in his heart and a conscience to apply the law. So man not only knows that God is, but he also knows *how* to walk in righteousness. The moral compass checks him when he is about to do wrong and it affirms him when he is about to do what is right. Some call this the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Paul said: *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them* (Rom. 2:14-15 NIV). The moral compass

restrains man from becoming overly wicked by preventing him from destroying himself.

The conscience is the mind of God being extended into the heart of man, created in His own image. It is the seat of the moral apparatus. It is that which, among other things, distinguishes man from other creatures. Referring to sports, the conscience is the umpire. It judges when the whistle is about to be blown; the game stops; and does not start up again until things are made right. These ancients I mentioned: Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Job paid attention to the whistle and therefore they walked with God. To put it another way: they moved forward when the light was green, they stopped when the light was red, they waited and prayed when the light was yellow.

Of course, as the blood of Jesus reaches into the future, so it has been retroactive into the past for in the end, without it no man can see God. Because the blood of the Lamb had not been shed before these ancients died, they were kept in paradise until Jesus finished His work on the cross before they went to heaven. Yes, Jesus finished their salvation. Indeed this verse applies to all from Abel to the last saint on earth: *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin* (1 John 1:7).

On the contrary, it can be said that any man acting against the truth, moral truths, whether he is born again or not, is lost. The blood of Jesus will not avail for him. Jesus said that he who lives by the truth (anyone), comes to the light (John 3:21). It has always been that way. So before Christ, man had, by virtue of being created in the image of God, an innate knowledge of Him, affirmed by nature; and with it he had a moral compass by which he could walk with God. These are gifts of God's love to all.

Now since the advent of Christ, in addition to all the above, man has much more:

3. The Witness of the Light of Jesus: John said of Jesus: *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* (John 1:9).

At birth, every child receives a great gift from God: light from the Lord Jesus Christ that causes him to know that Jesus is the Son of the living God. When little children, especially before the age of accountability, are told about Jesus they know instantly within their hearts that He is the Christ. Essentially, no man coming into the world is born poor because everyone is born with the

light of Jesus. This light is worth more than all the gold in the earth and all the money that has ever been printed. And every man who follows this inner light will know that Jesus is the Son of God and Jesus will reveal Himself to him and make His dwelling in him.

4. The Witness of The Holy Spirit: When Jesus left the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to convict the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). God is merciful to have given the pagan man so much to go by to know God and to walk with Him! On top of all this, we have the assuring words of Jeremiah: *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart* (Jer. 29:13).

Can you see clearly now that all men are without excuse on that great Judgment Day for not having accepted the light? How much more severe do you think will be the everlasting punishment toward those who know all this and in addition have received Christ only to return to the beggarly elements of the world (2 Peter 2:20-22)?

In summary: all men can know God as intimately as Enoch, Abraham, Noah, and Job without ever having heard the gospel of Christ. And all those who know Christ can know God much more intimately for He will not only be with them, but in them (John 15:4; Col. 1:27).

For the evangelist (and we are all called to be evangelists) **this means: whenever you witness to someone, no matter how much their resistance may be by reason or by word, there is always that little voice within them that witnesses to them by the Holy Spirit that what you are saying is right. Keep witnessing and let His Spirit set ablaze what they already know. With that you can win souls.**

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