

The Old Paths

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“Come ... Help Us”

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In Acts 16:9, we read about a vision that the apostle Paul had. Initially on this 2nd journey of Paul's, he was not allowed to go into the region known as Macedonia (Acts 16:6). Yet, after a time, Paul was allowed to go (v. 9). *“A vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us”* (Acts 16:9). The text continues, *“After he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”* (Acts 16:10).

Notice that upon receiving a vision where a man called to Paul and asked for help, Paul and the others with him understood that they needed to go preach the gospel to the people of Macedonia. Had you or I received such a vision, would we have understood that the gospel was what those folks were needing and not something else? It impresses me to note that after Paul got this vision, he did not endeavor to go and start a “welfare campaign” in Macedonia. He wasn't sending in food and other rations. He knew that the best way to help these folks was to make sure the gospel was heard by the people! Thus, he began his work of travelling through the area and preaching the gospel to all with whom he came in contact.

Friend, true “help” is given to folks when we take the opportunity to spread the gospel to them. It is the gospel that has the power to save (Rom. 1:16). It is the inspired Scriptures that make us complete and equip us for *“every good work”* (II Tim. 3:16-17). It is this same word that provides us with spiritual nourishment (Heb. 5:12-14; I Pet. 2:2), and gives us wisdom (Ps. 119:98-100). Truly Paul was doing the right thing when he went into Macedonia to “help” them by preaching the word to them!

Yet, do we consider the preaching and teaching of the gospel as “help”? Sadly, many today do not. They do not see the good that comes from learning and then applying the Scriptures. I am sorry to say that there are many “churches” who, in the name of “religion” will go into a region with medicines, supplies, housing materials, and the like, and call this “help”. In all of this, they do not supply man's most urgent need, nor provide him with the best “help” of all! When Paul went to Macedonia, he brought the best thing that could be taken to any land — the gospel!

Why is the gospel the best “help” of all? It is because within this, we learn of man's sin, and the cure (Rom. 3:23; Jn. 3:16). We learn of Christ, and how He came to this earth (Matt. 1; Lk. 2), lived and taught the truth (Matt. 5-7), and then died upon the cross and shed His blood *“for the remission of*

sins” (Matt. 20:28, 26:28). We then learn of His victory over death at His resurrection and His ascension (Lk. 24:1-9; Acts 1:9-11).

Based upon these facts we must believe, there are then commands we must obey. These commands include believing in Christ and being baptized *“for the remission of sins”* (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Our being buried in the watery grave of baptism, and rising to walk in newness of life corresponds to Christ's death on the cross, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6). When people hear, believe, and obey the Lord's plan of salvation, this is when they are truly helped! “Help” does not come by throwing money at a person or circumstance. Paul knew this as well. True “help” comes by introducing man to Christ (He is our advocate/helper, I Jn. 2:1) and showing him the Lord's plan of salvation!

Many ask for help in various forms today, but are we asking for the best “help” we could ever get? Are we asking for the help that the Macedonians asked for? Friends, have we asked what to do to be saved? Have we listened to the gospel, believed it and obeyed it? If not, why not? *“...Now is the day of salvation”* (II Cor. 6:2).

Once we are saved, are we now motivated to “help” our neighbors, our family, and even those we do not know? This is what we are taught to do in the New Testament (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; II Tim. 2:2, 4:2). The greatest help that can be offered to people is to introduce them to the Christ, our Savior, and show them what to do to be saved. This is what Paul did for the Macedonians, and everywhere he went. This is what we need to do today!

Being Religious And Still Being Lost?

Aric Russell

The Book of Acts is not only a book of history, but also a book of conversions. If one genuinely wants to know what to do to be saved, he can read the book of Acts and find the Biblical answer. For instance, the conversion of Saul teaches us a great deal. Let us take some time to learn something in regards to the conversion of Saul.

One of the things we should learn is that it is possible to be a religious person and still be lost. Saul was a religious person when he was breathing threats and murder against the Lord's church in Acts 9:1. In fact, look at what Paul himself said in Galatians 1:13-14. He said, *"For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers."* At one point in his life, Paul thought he was right regarding the things that he did. The same is true with people today. We too can be very religious and yet be lost. Many today say, "I just know that I am saved." How do they know? The only way to know if you are saved is to let the Bible tell you. Paul "felt" that he was doing a great service for God during the time that he was committed to the Jew's religion. However, the truth of the matter is that Christ said Paul was persecuting Him and making havoc of the church. Jesus addressed this matter in Mat-

thew 7:21-23. He said there, *"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."* Notice from this passage that only those who obey the Lord will be accepted into that eternal home. Multitudes today work fervently in man-made churches but in that day the Lord will say, *"Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?"* (Lk. 6:46)?

It is indeed sad to see so many zealous people saying, *"Lord, Lord"* while refusing to obey His commands. People must realize who the authority is in religion. It is not man, it is God! If we truly love Christ, we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15). Paul had to change his views in order to save his soul. Could it be that your religious beliefs are not found in the Word of God? Could it be the church of which you are a member is not found in the Bible? Remember that the devil doesn't mind religious people who are wrong in their beliefs because he knows they are lost. Once Paul realized

he was wrong, he had to change his beliefs and practices. Paul understood the value of his soul. Do you know how valuable your soul is? Are you willing to change your ways to follow after Christ?

Thoughts From The Past

"Error never dies a natural death, it has to be killed with the sword of the Spirit I do know this, nothing, but nothing, beats old time gospel preaching and hard-nosed Bible study. This is what it will take to keep the church on the straight and narrow path. When we depart from the fundamentals, we take our first step toward apostasy. Could it be that we are more concerned about being politically correct than with being Scripturally correct?"

(James P. Needham, *Guardian of Truth*, November 16, 1995, p. 11).

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