

NO MAN'S LAND

There are certain regions and wilderness areas in the world that have been called by men a "no man's land." They are said to be areas in which man cannot live and thrive. But in the matter of the salvation of the soul, this is the greatest no man's land of all. Salvation, as Jonah found out, is "of the Lord." It is all of God's grace, all in Christ and all for God's glory. This is the plain teaching of the gospel of John. God purposed, planned, purchased, produces and perpetuates the salvation of His people. Someone always says, "You mean I don't have anything to do with my salvation?" To which the scriptures reply, "Yes, you did the sinning! But God does all the saving!" This is truly "Emmanuel's Land." Tread this land and you face the judgment of all who dare steal the glory from God. Let us take a brief look at what the gospel of John says to us.

We find, first of all, that *"no man hath seen God... the Son hath declared Him."* (John 1:18) God is Spirit and no man can by searching find out God. No man has seen Him by the natural eye, nor in a vision, nor in nature. The Psalmist said in Psalm 97:2, *"Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."* But, John records, *"the Son hath declared him."* The Son has told out, unveiled, revealed and displayed the eternal God! In Hebrews 1 we read that Jesus Christ is *"the express image of his person"* and *"the brightness of his glory."* Paul says Christ is the *"image of the invisible God."* And further he says that "the glory of God" is in *"the face of Jesus Christ."* (II Cor. 4:6) The glory of His saving grace and mercy, the revelation of all His attributes is only to be seen in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we find in John 3:13, *"no man ascended... he came down."* Christ "came into this world" and therefore He existed

previously. *"The Word was God... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* (John 1) He is *"Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us."* This is the great *"mystery of godliness" that "God was manifest in the flesh."* He was "sent" of God the Father, not sent for by man. *"No man ascended" up to God.* No man, in his own strength, by his own works or merit or on the ground of his own righteousness can go to God! Christ alone *"ascended."* Nothing goes to heaven but that which comes down from heaven. *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."* (Psalm 24:3-4) This could only be speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ and all who are *"in Christ."*

Further, John records, *"no man taketh his life."* (John 10:18) The Lord Jesus Christ as the Substitute and Redeemer of His people voluntarily laid down His life! Christ the Good Shepherd said, *"I lay down my life for the sheep."* (John 10:15) His death was voluntary, substitutionary and particular! Not for all men, not for the *"goats"* but *"for the sheep."* Pilate questioned Christ saying, *"knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?"* To which Christ answered, *"Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."* Isaiah said of the Savior's death, *"it pleased the Lord to bruise him."* And when Peter spoke of Christ in Acts 2:23 he said, *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."* When Christ was hanging on the cross He *"cried with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost."* (Matt. 27:50) His death was not an accident or a mistake or merely the death of a martyr but the voluntary submission of the Surety to the law and justice of God as He fulfills the purpose and will of God in saving His people from their sins. The *"wages of sin is death"* and in order to *"redeem"* us and pay the *"ransom"* price due the justice of God because of our sin, the

Savior must bear the guilt and punishment due them in our place. He must willingly endure the wrath of God for us and be *"made a curse for us."* *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* 2 Corinthians 5:21

Then, Christ says, *"no man cometh unto the Father but by me."* (John 14:6) All men left God in Adam but all who come to God must do so in Christ! *"No man"* He says. Not the smartest, not the richest, not the best man. No man comes to God, is accepted by God and blessed by God except in Jesus Christ! Adam, the representative of our race, had communion with God, knowledge of God and life with God but lost it all when he sinned and fell in the garden. And as a result of his fall, we all fell in him! *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* (Romans 5:12) But the Lord Jesus is the only remedy for our plight and He declares Himself to be *"the Way, the Truth and the Life."* He is our Reconciler, our Illuminator and our Regenerator! There is *"no other foundation,"* and *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) Christ alone can represent us to God. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1 Timothy 2:5) Christ is our Prophet to reveal God to us, our Priest to represent us and intercede for us before God and our King to rule over us.

Notice also in John 6:44 that Christ says, *"no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."* The word "can" has to do with ability, not permission. In the Gospel there is an invitation graciously given; but more so it is a clear command to *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."* But Christ here says "no man can come." Why? Because of his condition spiritually! All men are *"dead in trespasses and sins."* Their fallen nature loves darkness and has no desire to come to the

Light. They love sin and not God. Men love the praise of men, the honor of men rather than that which comes from God. Christ told one group of religious Pharisees, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." They were religious but spiritually dead and this was the great evidence of that death, they would not come to Christ for life! Facing the fact that the wills of men are not free but bound to a nature of sin is a hard thing to do. But face it we must. Men are not dying but dead, not disoriented but lost, not facing judgment but condemned and not spiritually weak of sight but blind! The words of Christ stand unmoving against the claims of men and the invitations of modern evangelism. "No man can come!" He may come to the front of the church building during an invitational hymn or altar call. He may come to the preacher. He may come out of some of his ungodly habits and associations. But he cannot come to Christ "except the Father draw him!" Arthur Pink said, "The gospel is too spiritual for his carnal mind, too humbling for his pride, too exacting for his rebellious will, too lofty for his darkened understanding and too holy for his earthbound desires." A divine operation is necessary, a work of the grace and power of God the Spirit on the soul. The power does not lie in the will of the individual but in the hands of the sovereign God. All of God's people are effectually and irresistibly "drawn" to Christ by the Father through the preaching of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. For He follows, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:45) Do you see that? "Every man.... that hath heard... that hath learned... of the Father... comes" to Christ. Every one! They come to Christ in God-given faith.

Also, in John 8:11, Christ forgives a woman who is brought before Him and accused of adultery. After convicting her accusers of their own sin and causing them to go away, Christ asks her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" And she answered, "No man, Lord. And Jesus

said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." These are sweet words that belong to those who are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24) No man can condemn those who are in Christ. Since God has imputed their sins to Christ and He has put them away by the sacrifice of Himself and He has imputed to them the righteousness of Christ ... no man can condemn them! "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus... Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also make intercession for us." (Romans 8:1,33,34) The debt has been paid, God's justice has been satisfied, His law honored and all His attributes gloriously displayed for all who trust the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone and no man can condemn them.

And Christ continues to the comfort and assurance of the believing heart, He says in John 10:28,29 "No man is able to pluck them (the sheep) out of my hand." Every true believer is secure in Christ. We are "kept by the power of God through faith." We are given "eternal life" and "shall never perish" Why? Because of the Shepherd! If one of Christ's sheep could be lost, then what great dishonor it would be for the Shepherd in Whose hands they were entrusted. Paul said, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He who hath begun a good work in you shall perform it and present you faultless before the throne of glory.

Finally, before His departure from this earth, Christ encouraged His own, all of which shall face trial, tribulation and persecution in this world for being identified with Him. He says in John 16:22 "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." In Christ we have everlasting joy! Joy that no man can take away

because it is joy in the heart; joy in Him who is not of this world. Unchanging joy in Christ who changes not. Joy in "God... my exceeding joy."

Today, when men and women speak of their hope of salvation, they always begin with "I." "I made my decision." "I was baptized." "I joined the church." "I got my life together." "I accepted Jesus." All these things reveal that they know nothing of God's saving grace. Salvation is of the Lord! It is "not of works lest any man should boast." It is "not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us." Salvation is a no man's land because it is in the GodMan, Jesus Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

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