

YOUR QUESTIONS

ANSWERED BY ERNEST S. WILLIAMS



Why are the

Paul said, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil" (2 Timothy 4:14). Who was this Alexander?

Paul was writing to Timothy who was "ordained the first bishop of the church at Ephesus." The record indicates that Alexander, a Jewish coppersmith, was brought before the magistrate, probably to testify against Paul. Alexander took sides with those who were making silver shrines for Diana. (Read Acts 19:23-28).

Some think that this same Alexander may have testified against Paul at Rome when Paul made his first appearance before the authorities there (2 Timothy 4:16).

We hear people pray, "God, give our pastor a double portion of the Spirit." Is this prayer scriptural? The only place I find this term is in 2 Kings 2:9, where Elisha prayed that a double portion of Elijah's spirit might be upon him.

We are inclined to adopt expressions too loosely—but I think God understands our desires. One reason why we need Jesus as our High Priest is that He might present our petitions to the Father in better form than we in our infirmities are able to express them. God understands our fervent prayers for grace and power.

Elisha did not seek twice as much as Elijah had, but he sought the portion of the firstborn. It was the custom in Israel for the firstborn son to have a double portion of the inheritance as compared with the other children. Elisha knew he was anointed to succeed Elijah and wished the spiritual blessing of the firstborn that he might continue the ministry of Elijah.

Does Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:38 mean that a backslider loses all hope of restoration?

The warning concerns apostasy, which means a deliberate renunciation of the gospel. In the Book of Hebrews it was a special warning against any who had received the full blessing of salvation and afterward returned to Judaism from Christ, thus denying the Christian faith. To do this would be to turn from their only means of salvation, the atonement of Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit. To do so would be to insult or do "despite unto the Spirit of grace." See also Hebrews 10:28, 29.

A believer who is overcome by temptation might be restored since "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1, 2). There is a difference between being overcome by weakness and willfully rejecting Christ.

But let us be warned that returning to a continuance in sin is a serious matter. "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Peter 2:21).

If you have a spiritual problem or any question about the Bible, you are invited to write to "Your Questions," The Pentecostal Evangel, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, Missouri 65802. Brother Williams will answer if you send a stamped self-addressed envelope.

IS GOD FAIR? How can He eternally punish a man for rejecting Christ when the man has never even heard of Him? If there is no transgression where there is no law, wouldn't it be better not to tell them about God's law?

These questions have puzzled many generations of Christians. What conflict there is between our desire to accept the Scriptures literally and our finite sense of justice!

THE PROBLEM

Is a heathen, in the jungle or next door, lost because he has rejected Christ? This might be impossible. If he has never heard of Christ, he has neither accepted nor rejected Him.

Is he condemned because he potentially could have heard if someone had been faithful in his witness? The mind rejects such a concept.

Is the man to suffer everlasting punishment because God in His omniscience knows he would reject Christ if he did have a chance to hear? The Bible gives no basis for such a theory.

Is he lost because he fails to keep the Law? No, from the time of Adam men have sinned. All who perished in the Flood were being judged for their sin, and this was long before the Law was given. The Law only makes men aware that they are sinners.

THE CONDEMNATION

The Word of God says that an unconverted man, wherever he may live, or whenever he may have lived, is lost because he has sinned and come short of the glory of God. He has missed the mark.

This is the first basis of condemnation. Man falls short of the righteousness of God. The Jew fell short of His righteousness as it was revealed in the Law. The Gentile fell short of his own awareness of right and wrong given him through his conscience. This summary given by God in Romans 3:23 is that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

The second basis of condemnation is that men hold or suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Ralph Kuyper once said that *hold* means to hold down like a Jack-in-the-box. The truth keeps trying to spring up so that it can be clearly seen, but man in his rebellion holds it down and out of sight. He would rather believe a lie or trust his own reasoning—presuming to be wiser than God.

Mankind is guilty. "That which may be known of God is manifest... The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen... so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19, 20). They know Him to be God, but they refuse to receive even that germ of truth. These Romans worshiped the creature rather than the Creator.

Heathen Lost?

By MAXINE WILLIAMS

Vincent's *Word Studies* points out that the adverb *rather* indicates a passing by of the Creator altogether, not merely giving preference to the creature. Vincent also points out that the words in Romans 1:28, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," mean that they put Him to the test to see if they approved of Him, and that He didn't meet their approval.

THE PROVISION

Because men were sinners, Christ came. His coming did not make them sinners; they were sinners already. Because of the holiness and justice of God, this sin had to be judged.

The gospel is the *good news*. It tells men who are sinners that there is a way of hope—a way out of their existing predicament. The judgment of God has fallen on their sin in falling on Christ. If they will accept Him, they will find forgiveness, cleansing, and freedom from condemnation.

The Christian is not responsible for the lost condition of man. Many have felt that because they did not testify, men became subject to the wrath of God. No, His wrath

would have fallen on them anyway if they died without Christ.

However, the Christian does carry much responsibility for the fact that the heathen *continue* in their lost state. Our indifference and selfishness have prevented men from hearing the tidings of great joy: "Unto you is born... a Saviour." They have not heard that their sins may be forgiven, that Christ is the answer, "the door," "the way, the truth, and the life." "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

This is the motivation for making Christ known. God is not willing that any should perish. We cannot accuse God of unfairness, for it is the same for both us and the heathen: "The wages of sin is death." But it is unfair that when God has provided a means of escape, we are unwilling to tell them about it.

The heathen are not lost only because they have not accepted Christ. They are lost because they are sinners. Every tribe and every man recognizes a line between right and wrong. But without Christ, a man cannot live on the right side of his own line.

The *good news* is that Jesus Christ died to take the punishment for man's sin. These people can be saved if someone will tell them and if they will accept that truth by faith. But "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?" (Romans 10:14).

Christ said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21)—next door, down the block, or across the sea.

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