

## Does God Ever Give A Man Up?

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Hosea 4:17.

Israel and Judah were in a deplorable state of irreligion and moral debasement. The prophet Hosea, faithful to his task, recounted the prevailing vices quite frankly, and solemnly warned the people of the inevitable results of their wickedness. Many of the people had openly renounced God, and given themselves up to the worship of idols made with hands. They deliberately turned their backs upon God. Hosea's words suggested the solemn truth that a nation may fall away from God, lose sight of its early ideals, and incur the blindness which results from persistence in sin.

From the scriptures we learn that man is the crowning work of creation. He is the noblest work of God. He alone is endowed with intelligence. He can feel, think and reason. God placed him in authority over the fish of the sea, the creatures upon the earth, and the fowls of the air. And just in proportion to his exalted position are his privileges and responsibilities. He is made the arbiter of his own destiny. Good and evil, life and death, are set before him, with the power of choice.

But he is not left to himself in this matter. His Maker wishes him well and follows him up with invitations and incentives to make the right choices. He communicates with him, revealing His will and offering to him His blessing, guaranteeing support in time of need, and protection in time of danger. He even seeks his companionship. However, all of this may be in vain. Man may resent the approaches of his Maker until He may turn away and leave him to himself. Ephraim was favored with every opportunity of blessing, but finally God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

### I. God Always Seeks Man's Best Interests.

Man has never been left wholly to himself. His Maker has followed him even when he went into the depths of sin, commending His love toward him. In some way, He has always kept open a way of communication with the human race. As the ages passed, these communications became more frequent and more distinct, until now we are blessed with the abiding revelation of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." What good is intended for man?

#### 1. It is to save him.

Foreseeing the entrance of sin into the world and the consequent fall of man, God prepared beforehand the plan of salvation, and in the fullness of time all the details of that plan were wrought out. This plan of redemption deals with men as individuals, and must be addressed to each one through the intellect and the affections, leaving the matter of choice with the individual. God's revelation to man is sufficient to convince his judgment, conquer his will, and win his love. This salvation saves from sin, from the stain of sin, from the power of sin, from the love of sin, and from the consequences of sin.

#### 2. It is to make man better.

God's love for man and His desire for man's welfare runs through the whole scheme of redemption. The salvation of man necessarily involves the betterment of his condition. The sinner is urged to repent toward God and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, with the assurance that he will thereupon experience regeneration and the transformation of life. Salvation means a change of mind and heart and life. For this purpose, God would put His law in his mind, His grace in his heart, and His spirit in his life.

#### 3. It is that he may do good to others.

God told Abraham that He would bless him, and that he in turn would be a blessing. Paul asserted that the grace of God which was bestowed upon him was not in vain. Believers in Christ should witness to the saving power of His glorious gospel.

## II. How Does God Urge His Claims Upon Men?

### 1. Through the Bible.

In it He reveals to us His will, our true condition, everything essential to salvation, and our destiny. From the beginning to the end, it abounds in warning, in invitations, in instruction, and in promises. It is a standing protest against the sins of men and a perpetual offer of mercy and pardon to any who will accept it. Through it the Lord Jesus Christ knocks at the door of every heart asking admittance.

### 2. Through His ministers of the gospel.

God has selected whom He would, called them into His work, put within them the power of an endless life, put in their hearts a warm love for truth and righteousness and an unconquerable zeal for the salvation of men, impelled by which they go everywhere preaching the Word. They repeatedly urge men to accept Christ and be saved.

### 3. Through His providence.

Every returning season, with its fruit and food supply, is God's testimony to His goodness to men and His invitation to submission and trust.

### 4. By the Holy Spirit.

Powerful though they be, none of these agencies would avail anything without the work of the Holy Spirit. We are helpless in our fallen nature, and all of the means used to win us from sin will fail apart from the Holy Spirit; but with His aid men can turn to God.

## III. Does God Really Abandon Men?

Is there a limit to God's patience? The children of Israel went up to spy out the Promised Land. God promised to go with them, saying, "I will fight your battles and give you the land." The spies went up and came back to make their report. Some said, "They are giants." But what difference did it make if the enemies were giants, so long as they had God to fight their battles? If God is with us what do we care? They refused to go up and take the land, saying, "We are not ready to go." So God said, "Ye shall never go." Then they wanted to go, but God said, "No. If you try to possess the land now, your enemies will chase you like bees, for I will not go with you." God never gave them another chance. Some say, "God should have given them another chance; just one more chance anyway." God never gave them another chance, so they died in the wilderness. God's time was the only time they could go.

God not only has His ways and means for doing things, but His time as well. Whenever we fail to do things at God's time, we fail for all time, because there is no time except God's time. He has definite times for doing things, and if we miss His time the opportunity is gone forever. Failure to recognize this fact has wrought havoc with many a soul. It is a hazardous thing to trifle with God for He has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."

## IV. How Does God Give Man Up?

He gives man up by leaving him to himself. How utterly hopeless and

helpless man is when left alone. He is left with the accumulated guilt of a lifetime in sin, helpless in his depraved nature, loving darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. What could be more dreadful than for a man to be left to himself?

No man has a right to go to hell. It is wrong for a man to go to hell, and no man has a right to do wrong, but every man has the privilege of doing so. When God gives a man up, that man is given over to final destruction. Years ago a large excursion boat, the Benjamin Franklin, was going down the Ohio River with a party aboard. An old negro on the bank saw that the boat was afire in the hull. The boat was crowded with gay passengers, who were having a great time as they thought. The old negro shouted to them that the boat was on fire. They jeered at him and called him a fool. They said he was trying to disturb their pleasure. He got a skiff and started after them, knowing they would soon be leaping into the water. Before he overtook the boat, it was wrapped in flames which were bursting forth from the hull. He rescued all he could. They were glad to have his help then. If they had only heeded his warning, all of them might have escaped. You say, "Now preacher, you are trying to scare us." Well, some of you ought to be scared because you are in great danger. It is far better for you to be disturbed about your sins than to be doomed because of them. Anyone who can cause you to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for safety is your real friend. There is great danger in delay. God's time is the only time to act.

#### V. Why Does God Give A Man Up?

It is not because He has the power to do so. It is not because it gives Him pleasure, because He gets no pleasure from the death of the wicked. God gives a man up because there is no other course for Him to pursue when that man refuses to accept Christ as his Saviour. When one deliberately refuses the offers of mercy, there is nothing else that God can do. It is the very height of folly for any man to complain because God lets people go to hell. God's children will not go to hell, but all of those who refuse to accept Christ will go there.

Is there anything that God might have done for the salvation of men that He has not done? Not unless He should have saved men regardless of their wishes or against their wills. That sort of thing is unthinkable. Men are free to act of their own volition. They are not mere machines. So none have any grounds to complain. The offer of salvation is universal. If any go to hell, they must do so with their eyes open, in spite of God's offers of salvation and the pleadings of His Spirit. It is a terribly hazardous business to trifle with God.

There is a time, we know not when,  
A place, we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.

There is a line to us unseen,  
That crosses every path,  
That hidden boundary between  
God's patience and His wrath.

If you cross that line, unsaved friend, your doom is sealed. You cannot afford to trifle with God and force Him to say, "Let him alone." While the door of mercy is still open, and the invitations of grace are still extended, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour now. This may be your last opportunity.