**LOCAL MISSIONS 3: HAVING AN ANSWER**

***Colossians 4:6***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 9 – 6/24/2018

**Introduction:** Last week, we looked at some of the issues that can hinder us from fulfilling the mission locally. This week, we are going to look at some common statements or general beliefs that people use when confronted with the Gospel. If we are going to carry out the mission, then we ought to do everything in our power to be prepared to fulfill it. When one is presenting the Gospel, they will find that most people give the same handful of responses regarding their eternal destination. The Bible tells us that we are supposed to know how to answer every man. If you do not have an answer ready, you may miss an opportunity to further discuss the Gospel with that person. We ought to give the lost person confidence that we know what we believe, and we know what God’s Word says.

1. SOME BELIEVE THAT THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER DAY FOR SALVATION. (ACTS 17:23-34)
2. **Notice that “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).** Paul told the people in Corinth not to receive the grace of God in vain. He goes on to remind them in verse 2 that now is the accepted time, and that now is the day of salvation. When we are sharing the Gospel, we should help people to understand that God wants them to be saved now. They do not have to wait another day. They do not have to consider their options. We don’t have any examples in the Bible where someone went away from the preaching of the Gospel and then came back later. This doesn’t mean that it never happens, but it does show us that it is not common. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 3:15 that we should listen to God today to ensure that we do not harden our hearts. Each time the message is rejected, the heart gets harder. Just ask Pharaoh about that! As Christians, we are led to witness by the Holy Spirit. This means that each opportunity presented to a person to be saved is executed through a divine plan. What do you think would have happened with the Ethiopian Eunuch had he rejected the message from Philip?
3. **Notice that “ye know not what shall be on the morrow” (James 4:14).** While we should be thoughtful in how we present this truth, it is important that people understand that life is a vapor. The reality is that there will come a day for all of us in which a tomorrow does not follow. We are not promised to have another day of life. Every day of life is a gift from God, as He is the giver and taker of life (I Samuel 2:6). We ought to help people understand the importance of looking expediently at what happens after our time on this world concludes. The Bible tells us that the lost world has no hope in death. As Christians, we are able to look toward that Heavenly city and not be bound by the fear of death.
4. SOME BELIEVE THAT THEIR GOOD WILL BE ENOUGH FOR SALVATION. (MATT. 19:16-22)
5. **Notice that a works salvation leads to the sin of pride (Ephesians 2:8-10).** One of the common thoughts that people make regarding salvation is that they have to earn it. This is a truly prideful position to hold to think that we could possibly do enough to earn our way to a place of perfection. If we could do it of ourselves, then it would not glorify God and His Son. Salvation through faith takes all of the glory away from us, and it puts it on the only One who truly deserves it – God. Showing people these verses in Ephesians should open their eyes to God’s plan versus their own plan.
6. **Notice that a works salvation downplays the severity of sin (Isaiah 64:5-7).** The Bible tells us in the Book of Isaiah that our righteousness is as filthy rags. This is because we are sinful people. If we say that we can work our way to Heaven, we are saying that our good works outweigh the bad that we have done. This downplays the significance of sin and how it rules in our life. Our sin nature prevents us from truly being able to do good. Our works after salvation are only good because we have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling inside of us to help us. When man does that which is right in his own eyes, it doesn’t work out well for him. (Proverbs 12:5)
7. **Notice that a works salvation has never been God’s plan (Romans 9:31-32; Romans 4:1-7).** Some people look to the Old Testament and think that works salvation was the path for the nation of Israel. You will meet some who religiously follow the Ten Commandments. They are following the same foolish path that some of the Israelites followed. God makes it very clear in Romans 9 that salvation did not come by the following of the Law. It has always come by faith. Helping people understand this will clear up the notion that God changed His plan for the New Testament church era.
8. **Notice that a works salvation with faith is still a works salvation (Romans 11:6; Galatians 2:20-21).** The Bible tells us in Galatians that if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. One of the more popular notions you will hear from people is that they believe in Christ, but they also believe you have to do good works. It cannot be both because the two paths are contradictory to each other. Romans 11:6 makes it even clearer. If it is of grace, it cannot be of works. If it is of works, then it cannot be of grace. It is either one or the other. The reality is that faith with works is not really faith at all. False teachers who promote works and faith have done a great disservice to the plan of God, as they have convoluted the message of faith.

1. SOME BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE ALREADY DISQUALIFIED FROM SALVATION. (LUKE 23:39)

1. **Notice that God has saved men who have committed a variety of sins (I Timothy 1:12-14).** In 1 Timothy, Paul shares his salvation testimony. He reminds Timothy that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person before he was saved. Paul then goes on to say that he received mercy from God when he believed in Christ. There are many other examples of people in the Bible who were saved in spite of their past lives. If you are willing to come unto Christ, He will receive you. In John 6:37, Jesus gives us a promise that He will not cut off any that come unto Him. What a great promise for us to claim! We can trust that His sacrifice on the cross is powerful enough to offer forgiveness for even the greatest of our sins.
2. **Notice that Jesus condemned unbelief above the sins that man often recognizes (Matthew 11:21-24).** In Matthew 11, Jesus tells the people that it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for those in that city who continued to reject the Gospel. These were people who were trying to live good lives through the ten commandments, but they were unwilling to put their faith in Jesus Christ. We generally recognize Sodom as an extremely immoral and wicked city. Yet, Christ upbraids Capernaum more than that city. The only sin that we cannot be forgiven of is the sin of unbelief. The Bible speaks of this in Romans 11:23. It says that God is able to graft into His family any who do not abide in unbelief.
3. SOME BELIEVE THAT A RELIGION OR DENOMINATION BRINGS SALVATION. (ACTS 15:1-2)

1. **Notice that knowing God or talking about God does not bring salvation (Matthew 7:21-23).** We live in a day where a high percentage of our country proclaims to be a Christian. Yet, our country continues to fall further and further into sin. When you talk to people, there are those who will say that they are going to Heaven because they are religious. They have taken their religious heritage as a banner for their salvation. This did not work for the nation of Israel (see the book of Romans), and it does not work today. Jesus said that there will be some who say that they prophesied in His name, but He will say that He never knew them.
2. **Notice that the message is only about Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:1-11).** The church at Corinth had strife as a result of their identification. Some of them wanted to identify with Paul. Others wanted to identify with Apollos. Paul rebukes them for being immature Christians. He reminds them that all that matters is being a follower of Jesus Christ. Too often, people get caught up when we tell them that we are Baptists. They think that going to Heaven is about becoming a Baptist. We must help them understand that it is just about Christ. We are Baptists because the name identifies with what we believe from the Bible. Unfortunately, though, there will be some who call themselves Baptists, who never truly put their faith in Jesus Christ. What will that name Baptist mean at the judgment seat of Christ?
3. **Notice that Jesus shared the Gospel with more than just Jews (John 4:9).** While Jesus primarily preached to the Nation of Israel (This was God’s plan.), we see Him preaching to the Samaritan woman in John 4. The woman was shocked that Jesus was willing to speak to her, given that she was a Samaritan. Just as there are those who think they are going to Heaven because they are religious, there are those who think that religion is not for them because they assume it is for a certain type of person. Salvation is for all (2 Peter 3:9). We must not be a respecter of persons when we share the Gospel, and we must show people that God is not a respecter of persons either (Acts 10:34).

**CONCLUSION**: While this lesson does not cover every belief or reasoning that people use, it does provide a general idea of what most people think regarding salvation. While we know what we believe, we should make sure that we know it well enough to help others. We should be prepared to answer their questions, no matter how challenging they might be. God will give us the wisdom in the words that we use, but we must also make sure that we know what the Word of God says. It is through the Incorruptible Seed (God’s Word) that the Gospel is sown in the hearts of man.