

185. Why Is It that Not All Men are Brought to Faith and Salvation through the Gospel?

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Acts 7, 51.

There are many people who hear the Gospel and yet do not come to a true faith in Christ Jesus. And there are many who once did have the true faith in their hearts and later lost it and relapsed into spiritual death. All these are lost. Of such the Lord Jesus says Matt. 22, 14: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

How is this? What is the cause of it? Is not the Holy Ghost willing to do His work in everyone who hears the Gospel? Does not God earnestly desire all men to be saved? Indeed, He does. He solemnly affirms this Ezek. 33, 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Paul writes: "God will have all men to be saved." Peter writes: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish." It is wicked therefore to say that God does not want all men to be saved. Why, then, is it that so many who hear the Gospel are not saved? The only right answer is: *They are lost by their own fault*, because they obstinately resist the Word and Spirit of God. Therefore Stephen, the faithful confessor of Jesus Christ, said to the High Council at Jerusalem: "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*"

What, then, is the true reason why these people do not believe? It is their wickedness that keeps them from accepting the Gospel, their spiritual pride and self-righteousness, or the love of sin, which makes them harden their hearts against the gracious invitation and obstinately to resist the Holy Ghost, so that they are lost by their own fault. On the Last Day there will be for them no excuse. The Lord will say to them as He said to Jerusalem, "Ye would not." Let us always be careful not to resist within ourselves when we hear what God has to say to us.

Prayer.

O God the Holy Ghost, preserve the faith Thou hast kindled in my heart and quench not the smoking flax. Guard me against the attacks of the Evil One. Let not my heart be hardened in unbelief and wickedness. Let me not tremble nor despair at the sight of death. Restrain my impatience and make me inclined to yield to Thy will, O God, my Lord. Grant me grace to bring my life to a happy and joyful close. Keep my heart and mind in the peace of my Lord Jesus Christ. And when I am no longer able to speak, then preserve and seal the memory of the holy name of Jesus Christ in my heart; and with it let me fall asleep in peace. Amen.

Delay not, delay not! The Spirit of grace,
Long grieved and resisted, may take His sad flight
And leave thee in darkness to finish thy race,
To sink in the vale of eternity's night.

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