

Getting Lost

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Acts 16:22-31

Yesterday evening at 8:25 pm there were an estimated 7,197,902,212 people in the world. Of these, there are about 33% or 2,375,307,730 who profess some sort of “Christian” religion. If we assumed that every one of these were truly saved, that would leave 4,822,594,482 people in the world who are lost by even the most liberal so-called Christian view. The one thing that the vast majority of this earthly horde has in common is that they do not believe that they are lost. In fact, almost half of them claim some sort of religious affiliation that provides some kind of doctrine of salvation.

When we look at these statistics, it is not hard to fathom what a powerful influence sin has on human civilization. Well over 70% of the world is lost, based on bible doctrine. The numbers are staggering. We can hardly comprehend it. Now, statistics declare that 75% of Americans claim some Christian religious affiliation. Which might make you think that in America, only about 30% of our citizens are lost. But if being born again, as we believe and as the bible teaches in John 3, is the first and only mark of truly being saved, then the number of saved people among Christian religions in America shrinks to around 33-35%. That means, based on these statistics, even here in the U.S. it is possible that 2 out of every 3 people you meet on the street are lost. And of those two people it is likely that both of them would deny that they are lost, based on what they believe from living in our culture. With the stupendous proliferation of religion on earth, and from the human standpoint, it is harder to get folks lost (mentally and as a realization) than it is to get them saved!

How can these almost unbelievable things be a reality? How is it that with religion at an all-time high, and humans at the pinnacle of advancement in technology and learning, do we have an entire planet covered with people who are lost and either don't know it, refuse to admit it, or simply don't care? We want to look at three prominent distractions in human societies which take away the focus on being lost and aid an unbelieving world to die without Christ and without remedy.

I. Worldly Mindedness Can Make Being Lost or Saved of No Importance or Not An Issue

- Of the 6 billion plus people that are lost by any Christian definition, the majority are no doubt living day to day with a lot more on their minds than what awaits them in eternity. We'll call this the “here and now syndrome.”
 - ▶ There is a family to feed
 - ▶ There is a job to do
 - ▶ There are bills to worry about
 - ▶ There are personal goals to be focused on
 - ▶ There is living to be done
 - ▶ There is fun to be had
 - ▶ This kind of dealing with eternity by making sure you are distracted by other interests would be like a man on a trip by plane across the country who is engrossed in reading a book. The attendant announces that passengers need to prepare for an emergency landing and the

landing is not at an airport. So, to prepare for a crash, the man simply gets more deeply engrossed in reading his book!

- ▶ Or like a man on an ocean cruise in which the ship begins to sink, so to prepare for a disaster he begins to study the sunset!
- What this group of folks are doing is denying that they are lost by simply not considering it a priority. This is one great trap for lost people and billions fall into it.
- Jesus characterized the results of this worldly mindedness in **Matthew 13:22** - He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care (merimna - [mer'-im-nah] - (through the idea of ***distraction***); *solicitude*;) of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.
- We see the worldly mindedness in action in governor Felix' answer to Paul in **Acts 24:24-25**
 - ▶ Here with Felix, worldly affairs, politics, and money made being lost of low importance and being saved not an important issue.
 - ▶ **Act 24:24-25** And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; **when I have a convenient season**, I will call for thee.

II. Religious-mindedness Can Provide a False Security That Hides a Lost Condition

- So many times when we talk to folks about faith in Christ, about being saved, they immediately roll out their religious credentials - this is one way that people use religion to hide (from themselves) a lost condition
- There are people in the world whose religious doctrines guarantee their lost condition and provide a defense against any accusations that they ARE lost. How does that work?
 - ▶ Let's use the religion of good works as an example. This religion teaches that good works will save you. Such a doctrine will not only provide a claim to salvation that doesn't involve any help from Christ while at the same time claiming that it is a salvation by Christ. By doing this, it gives that religious person a defense against any accusations that he or she is lost.
 - ▶ I want to illustrate this madness using something that is common today. Obamaphones! Today, if you are on welfare, or you are just broke, and are out on the street, you can get an Obamaphone. You can walk around with a nice cell phone, text and talk on it around all your friends. It makes you look like you have money, that you are somebody, and that you don't have a care in the world. But what do you really have? You have no money except what you get from the government. You have no place to live unless you are getting free housing from the government or are living with a family member. You have no job. Odds are you have very little self-esteem. But that's not how it looks! You have cover! This is the way it is with people who wear a cloak of religion, but have no salvation.
 - ▶ Claiming religion for standing with Christ was exactly the argument used by those people whom Christ spoke about in **Mat. 7:22-23** Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? **23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.** (Note here that religious works without salvation are works of iniquity).
 - ▶ The same with a religion that teaches that people are saved by baptism
 - ▶ The same with any kind of religion that teaches doctrine that causes people to depend on a substitute christ. When a religion presents a christ who is not the only begotten Son of

God, it effectively blinds people to their lost condition.

- In another part of scripture, Jesus brings before us a group of religious folks whose religious mindedness provided them with all they needed to hide the fact of their lost condition - **Mat 23:23** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, (they made tithing to be the proof of their righteousness) and have **omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith**: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.
 - ▶ The religious laws of the Jews demanded **practices that declared judgment every day** (sacrificial offerings at the altar); **preached the message of infinite mercy** (an animal died in the place of the Jewish sinner) and **declared a promise of salvation to come by which people could be saved by faith** (the offerings of the Jews religion pointed to the atoning Messiah who would come)
- Here is an important point for us to remember: Religious works distract from the need to consider the root truths about the certain judgment of God, the offer of mercy to the sinner, the avenue of faith for changing the lost condition.

III. An Intellectual Skepticism Can Provide a Shield Against Any Realization About Being Lost

- In our world today, being an intellectual is a kind of status symbol. To have knowledge is to be somebody. Paul said it well when he said (**I Cor. 8:1**) “knowledge puffeth up...” In fact, knowledge swells the heads of many folks to the point that they feel no need for God, or any god. So, having no need for God, there is no need to consider a condition called “being lost.” Things like resurrection, judgment, hell, heaven, etc. would have no importance since the mind of such a person had gotten beyond these things and view them only as fantasies.
 - ▶ When I thought about this thing of intellectualism blinding people, I thought about a biology professor I had in college. He was an avowed atheist and wasn’t afraid to say so. He was a man who presented an air of intellectual superiority, and he believed wholeheartedly in evolution...of course. He considered it beneath him to entertain any idea of believing in God or the need for salvation, or the hope of eternal life.
 - ▶ Whenever humans think themselves so smart that they don’t need God, they have practically adopted another god...themselves and their knowledge. This group is skeptical of anything they cannot measure, see, or validate with raw human perceptions. In most cases, they define their own parameters for what is worthy and what is important.
 - ▶ The apostle Paul brings us a group of such folks in **Acts 17:16-19; 31-32**:
 - The Stoics in effect worshiped knowledge born of experience or what was learned through the senses; and they set virtue up as god - morality became a kind of god
 - The Epicureans believed that pleasure was the only intrinsic good (and so set pleasure up as a god)

IV. Now back to our sermon text: What was different about this Philippian jailer?

- The difference is seen in what he said in v. 30 - “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
- He recognized he was lost -
 - ▶ He recognized his eternal danger
 - ▶ He had an enormous concern
 - ▶ He sought a remedy
 - ▶ He found a remedy