

# THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

by

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### REDEMPTION VERSUS RELIGION

AS A RULE while there is much talking about religion, very little serious thinking is done in regard to it. And it is for that reason, perhaps, that so frequently you hear the remark, "Any religion is good enough, provided its followers are sincere."

It is for that reason, too, no doubt, that on every hand it is simply taken for granted that a man's choice of religion is purely a matter of personal preference, like the kind of tie he wears or the style of hat he prefers; and, consequently, since religion is purely a matter of personal preference, it is the height of intolerance to find fault with a man's convictions on this point. Therefore, the only proper attitude to assume is that of broad-minded indifferentism toward beliefs which may conflict with your own.

In her syndicated column, *My Day*, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose opinion commands attention and respect, recently said this:

"I keep getting letters which point up the prejudices in which so many of us indulge, even in wartime. They are not always prejudices against a race, sometimes they are religious prejudices. For instance, some people do not wish to be where Catholics or Jews predominate in their environment. Sometimes, it is Protestants who are banned.

"All this seems out of place in a country with so many racial origins and so many religions. Our soldiers fight and die, side by side, and are comforted by priests, ministers, or rabbis, as the case may be, quite regardless of whether the dying boy belongs to the particular church represented near them at the moment.

"It seems to me this might teach us, as civilians, a lesson. What is really important is not what religion or race we belong to, but how we live our lives, whether we deal with others with honesty and kindness, or whether we lie and cheat and take advantage of our neighbors. I wish that out of this war might come to us a truer evaluation of the worth of human beings and far less interest in the labels of race and religion."

To argue that any religion is good enough provided its followers are sincere is to make sincerity the final test of truth. But the ordinary experiences of life continually prove that a man may be sincerely wrong, and if so, all his sincerity does not avert pain and sorrow and disaster. A chemist may sincerely mix together the wrong ingredients and, despite his sincerity, blow himself and his laboratory into fragments.

A salesman, hurrying to make connections, may sincerely take the wrong train and, despite his sincerity, arrive at a place miles away from his desired destination, and so lose out on a valuable contract. A mother, groping about for medicine at night in a dark room, may sincerely give her sick child a wrong prescription and, despite her sincerity, cause agony and even death.

Unless a religion squares with the facts of history and human experience; and unless it agrees with the truth of God which is the underlying reality of all things, that religion, however sincere its followers may be, is not good enough. Truth, after all, is truth, whether in surgery, or mathematics, or science; no self-respecting mathematician tolerates mistakes in an algebraic problem. No self-respecting surgeon is broad-mindedly indifferent as to the right or wrong operational technique. No self-respecting scientist carelessly shrugs his shoulders and lets error go by unchallenged.

The opinion that any religion is good enough provided its followers are sincere is contrary to the teachings of the Bible. If the Bible is indeed the Word of God; if it is indeed a supernatural revelation of what the Creator of men desires them to know and believe and do; if it is indeed the only infallible guide for faith and practice; then of course the Bible is the Supreme Court in the sphere of religion. Then, of course, we must accept and abide by its decisions. Then all our own opinions must be brought into conformity with it.

What, therefore, has God said concerning broad-minded indifferentism in religion? Does the Bible indiscriminately sanction all creeds as so many different highroads to a blessed eternity? Or does it dogmatically set forth one faith and one alone as the way to the glory of God and the God of glory?

**“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”** (Proverbs 14:12).

It is evident, then, that not every and any way which a man may choose to follow is of God’s appointment and enjoys God’s approval, even though the way seem right and be sincerely adhered to. Unless a man is walking in the right way, the end of his journey will be death, and death in Scripture is the symbol of exile from the glory of God and the God of glory.

**“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”** (John 14:6)

Listen also to these words of the Lord Jesus:

**“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”** (John 10:9).

Or listen to the apostle Peter:

**“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12).

Listen likewise to the apostle Paul:

**“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”** (I Corinthians 3:11).

In that day when the floods of judgment thunder and the winds of judgment howl, all other foundations will give way. Only faith in the crucified Son of God will then avail.

Why do you suppose the Bible repeatedly urges, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”** (Acts 16:31)?

Why do you suppose it repeatedly asserts, **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”** (John 3:36)?

The Bible does so because, whatever man may think, God does not look upon religion as a matter of indifference. In His eyes there can be only one saving faith, and that is the faith made possible by His grace, the faith commanded in His Word, the faith which centers in the loving and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The widespread opinion that any religion is good enough, provided its followers are sincere, is contrary to experience.

Not every religion endows a man with peace that passeth all understanding. Only faith in Christ can do that. What other religion gives a man courage to face the hardest tests and trials of life with a song? What other religion brings into the heart of a man the joyous certainty that all his sins have been completely and forever forgiven? What other religion enables a man to walk through the valley of the shadow of death without fear and doubting? And certainly no other religion places at a man’s disposal the infinite resources of God’s omnipotence for battle against besetting temptations and inborn weaknesses. Only faith in Christ can do that.

A searching test of any religion is this: What are its fruits in human life? Does it produce love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, gentleness, meekness and temperance? Whatever the various religions of the world may be able to do in bringing forth this fruit, faith in Jesus Christ most certainly has the power of generating all these qualities in the depths of men’s hearts. Pierre Loti, the French literary genius, was not a Christian and can therefore be accepted as an unprejudiced witness. Here, then, is what he wrote concerning this:

“Those who still bow before the feet of Christ know nothing of the anguish of passing time, the anguish of loneliness and the terror of coming extinction. They go on their way confident and calm. I would give my life to possess that radiant illusion of theirs, even at the risk of becoming as infatuated as the poor lunatics in asylums who fancy themselves among the rich and powerful of earth. In default of this faith could we but anchor ourselves to something, some hope, some immortality — but there is nothing. Outside of this ever-shining personality of Christ everything is terror and darkness.”

From the Orient comes the story of a man who dreamed that he had stumbled into a deep pit where he lay in helpless despair. A Confucianist, passing by, leaned over the edge of the hole and shouted down, "Friend, let me give you some good advice. If you ever get out of your trouble, see to it that you never get into it again." Shortly afterwards a Buddhist passing by leaned over the edge of the hole and shouted down, "Friend, if you manage to climb up so that I can grab your hand, I will help you out." Then in the dream Christ passed by and, hearing the groans of despair, descended into the pit and climbed out with the man on His shoulders. That is the difference between mere religion and faith in the Lord Jesus. Religion may offer you sage advice and make an ineffectual effort to help you help yourself, but Christ, descending to the level of your wretchedness and impotence, lifts you up into liberty and joy. That was why when challenged by a Chinese statesman, "What right have you Christians to bring your gospel to this country where we have our own religions?" the missionary answered, "The right to give to others something too good to keep."

Are you experiencing love and joy and peace in your heart? If not, a different religion can offer you no help. What you need is to enter by faith into a redeeming relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. W. Graham Scroggie, formerly pastor of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, London, published a book of excerpts from the diaries of his mother, a woman of extraordinary judgment and spiritual insight. This is one of her comments:

"The Gospel is God's power, and is enough for all His purpose. I know of nothing more urgent today than that men and women engaged in the recognized service of Christ should be soundly converted to God. Class-leaders, Sunday School Teachers, Organists, Members of Choirs, Secretaries, Treasurers, Elders, Deacons, and even Ministers of Churches, in numberless cases, have never stood behind the sheltering blood, have never been delivered from the guilt of sin, or come into possession of the life of God. Everybody finds it necessary to have so much religion, but religion does not save. Cain was one of the most devoted religionists who ever trod the soil. Once an old woman, asked if she had religion, replied, 'No, thank God, I've lost that, it was nearly the death of me, and now I have Christ.' I would to God that the multitude of our religionists today would make the same fruitful exchange."

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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