

DESERVING FOLKS WOULDN'T NEED SAVING OR, 'IT CAN'T BE BOTH WAYS'

Popular religion asserts that all men are possessed of an innate ability to either accept salvation or reject it, or, essentially, to make a choice between heaven or hell. But if they actually possessed such an ability that would also mean that they were not depraved by nature, and if they were not depraved by nature, then that would mean that they did not need saving in the first place. If Adam's posterity did not, and do not, inherit a depraved or corrupt nature as a result of his transgression in the Garden of Eden, and if they consequently are not sinners, then there is nothing they need to be saved from.

Now, let us suppose it were possible for a person who did not have a sinful nature to be offered a choice between either heaven or hell based on his own decision. In such a case there would be nothing to prevent his making the right choice. There would be nothing in his nature to compel him to make the wrong choice. He would not be so foolish as to make an eternally fatal choice. But such a case can never be, because all men fell in Adam, and consequently they all inherit a nature that views the things of the Spirit of God as foolishness (I Cor. 2:14). Their heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Their will, without a spiritual birth, is therefore bent only toward evil. Given a choice between good or evil, and left to the exertion of their own choice, they will always choose the evil. This is why the new birth is necessary, and that can only be brought about by the almighty power of God (Eph. 2:1 & 5), "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13).

I have always said that if all men deserved a chance to go to heaven, then on the same basis that they deserved a chance, they would also deserve a home in heaven. And if they deserved a home in heaven, then why would they need saving from hell? Deserving characters would not need saving from hell, for they would already be fit subjects for heaven except for the final glorification of the body. (Even an innocent natural body would have to be glorified before it could bear the resplendent glory of heaven.)

It is a mystery how anyone can think that eternal salvation can be by grace if they think everybody is deserving of it. By definition, grace is "free and unmerited favor bestowed upon undeserving characters." How then could their home in heaven be by grace if it was merited and deserved? Like the apostle Paul said, it is either by grace or else it is by works (Romans 11:5-6). It can't be both ways.—Elder Ralph Harris