



Spirit of Grace

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Herald

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“Except through Me”

The exclusive nature of the Christian faith bothers a lot of people. Most folks have no problem with the Jesus who blesses children, heals the sick, and teaches us to love one another. But when that same Jesus tells them that He is the only way to a relationship with God, they get pretty uncomfortable. To suggest that sincere, devout, and kindly people from other faiths, or no faith at all, might end up in hell for refusing to believe in Jesus seems harsh and intolerant.

Even pastors sometimes find it difficult to defend this position. One of America's most famous pastors, Joel Osteen, was on the Larry King TV show a few years ago, when King zeroed in on this:

King: What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

Osteen: You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and who wouldn't go to heaven... I just think that only God can

judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.

I read the transcript of the entire interview, and in the times when pressed hardest by Larry about whether unbelievers would go to hell, he used the phrase “**I don't know**” eight different times. There is certainly nothing wrong with acknowledging our ignorance in certain areas. If I were grilled about internal combustion engines, why and how computers compute, or nuclear physics, I would find myself using that phrase frequently. But when it comes to whether someone can get to heaven apart from faith in Jesus Christ, there is no reason for “I

don't know”. The same Jesus who tells us He didn't come into the world to condemn the world but to save the world, has also declared plainly, “**If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**” His closest apostle wrote, “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; **he who does not have the Son of God does not have life**” (1 John 5:11,12).

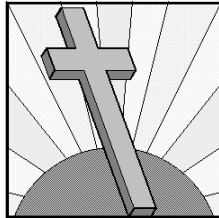
The standard defense for declaring ignorance in this area, which Osteen readily used, is that we are not the judge; only God can judge someone's heart. This is certainly true but really has nothing to do with the subject in question. If I consider myself superior to my brother because he doesn't live according to my own convictions and personal preferences, I am judging. But to say that a man or woman without Jesus is lost and has no hope of heaven is not judging; it is simply reiterating what the Bible says over and over again. Indeed if we don't believe and say this we are calling Jesus a liar. He was unapologetic about the matter: “No one comes to the Father **except through Me**” (John 14:6).

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The Exchanged Life

Understanding the power and reality of our crucifixion with Jesus, and His life in us is absolutely vital to fruitful and joyous Christian living. To help you in this area we are offering this month Dennis' 6-CD series, **The Exchanged Life**, at a reduced price of \$20 (includes S/H). At the heart of failure and disappointment in Christian efforts and ministry is self. Learn how Christ turns zeroes into heroes as he takes us through the process of spiritual bankruptcy and then on into the joy of God's incredible riches in Christ Jesus. Order this important series today!



“Except through Me”

To embrace the Bible is to hold to all its precepts and this includes some truths that are not at all palatable to the secular mind. It is natural that we should want to avoid being perceived as harsh or unloving. But backing away from the exclusivity of Jesus is doing no one a favor. The greatest thing the church can do for the world is to present Jesus as He truly is – without dilution. Yes He is loving, yes He brings abundant life. And we will joyfully proclaim this to one and all. But we cannot wimp out by suggesting that the alternative to Jesus is merely a lesser quality of life. He did not come to improve our lives. He came to give us life.

There couldn't possibly be just one way. — Oprah Winfrey

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. — the apostle Peter

Quotes by Charles Spurgeon on preaching Jesus

The motto of all true servants of God must be, “We preach Christ; and him crucified.” A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching.

[Exposition of Acts 13:13-49]

Leave Christ out? O my brethren, better leave the pulpit out altogether. If a man can preach one sermon without mentioning Christ's name in it, it ought to be his last, certainly the last that any Christian ought to go to hear him preach. *[sermon: “A Prayer for the Church” (1867)]*

Leave Christ out of the preaching and you shall do nothing. Only advertise it all over London, Mr. Baker, that you are making bread without flour; put it in every paper, “Bread without flour” and you may soon shut up your shop, for your customers will hurry off to other tradesmen. ... A sermon without Christ as its beginning, middle, and end is a mistake in conception and a crime in execution. *[sermon: “Christ the Glory of His People” (1868)]*