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GOD'S WAY VS. MAN'S WAY

BY: C. D. COLE

"Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," Acts 14:16; ***"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent,"*** Acts 17:30.

There are two ways set before us in the Scriptures: God's way and man's way. God says in Isaiah 55:9: *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* David prays in these words: *"Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies,"* Psalm 27:11. God's ways are heavenly; man's ways are earthly. God's way is right; man's way is wrong. Speaking of God's way, the Psalmist says, *"As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him,"* Psalm 18:30. Speaking of man, Isaiah says: *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,"* Isaiah 53:6. Man's way is a way of ignorance. *"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,"* Jeremiah 10:23. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death,"* Proverbs 14:12.

Man's ways are known to God. *"He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold,"* Job 23:10. *"For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings,"* Job 34:21. *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,"* Proverbs 15:3. David says: *"Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways,"* Psalm 139:3. *"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,"* Hebrews 4:13.

Our text points to a time when God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. *"Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."* To suffer means to allow or permit. Our text says that God allowed or permitted all nations to walk in their own ways. **How?**

I. Not by giving them license to do as they pleased. Not by condoning their sin. It does not mean that God had pleasure in what they did. It does not mean that God loved their ways, or approved of their ways. The word suffer in this connection means a negative consent. There is in the word the idea of toleration. He tolerates their ways for a while, only to punish them in the end, for we read that *"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,"* Psalm 9:17.

II. God suffered them to walk in their own ways by giving them up to themselves. He left them to themselves. He threw about them no restraints of grace, nor of law. He just let them do as they wanted to. *"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves,"* Romans 1:24.

A. He gave them no written law.

B. He sent no prophets to warn them of their evil way. One of the greatest blessings to any people is a faithful prophet to warn them of the danger of having their own way. There is a clamor today on the part of the people for preachers who will not disturb the present order of things--men are wanted who will fit into the world's mold. A preacher, in the popular eye, is a failure if his preaching causes trouble and splits a church.

When God permits people to have their own way, He is not acting in mercy but in judgment. The worst thing that could happen to any of us would be for God to let us have our own way. We ought to thank God for every rebuke, for every sharp sermon that brought us face to face with our sins. We are all such fools that we do not know our friends when we see them. We are so stupid as to think that the preacher that flatters and pampers, and never gets under our skin, is a great fellow.

C. God suffered them to walk in their own ways in that He did not send His Spirit to convict them of their evil ways. It is a great day in any life when God's Spirit opens the eye of conscience to see the vile that is present. When God lays hands on man to save him, the first thing He does is a work of destruction. He blasts all our former hopes, before He gives us the good hope that is in Christ. Before He sends the showers of refreshing, He sends a terrible drought and our souls become dry and parched. Before He shows us the living fountain, He cracks our manufactured cisterns and causes all the water of human merit to run out. Before He clothes us with the robe of Christ's imputed righteous-

ness, He strips us of our filthy rags of self-righteousness, and holds it up to our gaze. He makes us weak before He makes us strong; He makes us sad before He makes us glad.

What were the results of walking in their own way? Nothing good.

I. False religions. The heathen nations are not irreligious, but they are held in the grip of false religions. The heathen nations are an example of what men will become when God lets them have their own way. *"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils,"* I Corinthians 10:20. *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,"* Romans 1:21-23.

II. Immorality. *"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies, between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them,"* Romans 1:24-32.

Man does not have a free will to do good. When he has his own way he does bad. His conduct is in keeping with his nature. *"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,"* Job 14:4.

God in salvation brings man to the end of his own way. He gives him strength (see Romans 8:3); peace (see Colossians 1:20); and righteousness (see Romans 10:4). The Bible says in Psalm 37:5, *"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."*

Is it a way of poverty? Commit thy way unto the Lord. Is it a way of disobedient children? Commit thy way unto the Lord. Is it a way of sickness? Commit thy way unto the Lord. Is it a way of darkness and uncertainty? Commit thy way unto the Lord. Is it a way of loneliness? Have friends forsaken thee? Commit thy way unto the Lord. Oh, how wonderful it is to know God's way for our life!

I WANT TO KNOW!

In 1492, Columbus said, "I want to know," and discovered America.

Benjamin Franklin said, "I want to know," and discovered electricity. Alexander Graham Bell said, "I want to know," and invented the telephone.

Henry Ford said, "I want to know," and gave us the automobile. Colonel Charles Lindberg said, "I want to know," and made the historic solo flight to Paris.

American scientists said, "we want to know," and the terrifying A-bombs and H-bombs became a reality.

I once said, "I want to know," and found that it **IS** possible to have everlasting life here and now--and to be sure of it! Like so many, I felt it would be impossible to be sure of heaven until after death--and then I came face to face with God's promises in the Bible. I had to choose between my own feelings or the unmistakable declarations of my Creator and God. I chose to believe God. The peace, assurance, security and hope He has imparted since that step of faith are beyond description. Truly, I know!

God has given in the Bible unmistakable directions so that all may know. You who read this--you may know! Here is what God says in the Bible: First, that you have sinned against Him and deserve eternal death: *"All have sinned...the wages of sin is death,"* Romans 3:23, 6:23). Second, that a holy God loves you: *"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"* Romans 5:8. Third, that Jesus loves you and died for you: *"The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me,"* Galatians 2:20. Fourth that you must, by faith, receive Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Saviour: *"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name,"* John 20:31.

Friend, don't let anything hinder you from entering into this "know-so" salvation which God freely and fully offers you at this moment. I beseech you, find a Bible and look up these wonderful promises of God. Millions living on the earth today have entered into the blessedness and joy of the knowledge of sins forgiven, the very peace of God abiding within, and the assurance of eternal life in heaven with our lovely Lord. You, too, can know these eternal blessings.

Listen! The Bible says, *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God...we know that when He (Jesus) shall appear, we shall be like Him...We know that we have passed from death unto life...These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life,"* I John 3:2, 14; 5:13.

Some people **hope** they are saved. Many **think** they are saved. Others **wish** they were saved. The Bible says **you can know you are saved**!

--Copied

THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS

BY: AL GORMLEY

"And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," **Luke 15:2.**

One of the greatest truths of the Bible is stated in our text. *"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."* Paul says in I Timothy 1:15 that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. If He came to save sinners, then it is an evident fact that He will receive the sinner who comes to Him for salvation.

Why would a sinner come to Jesus unless he felt his need to be saved? Therefore, the sinner who comes to Jesus must come with a broken heart and a godly sorrow that he has sinned against God, that his sin deserves to be punished in the fires of hell, believing that Jesus came into this world to save him personally.

The prodigal son gives us a perfect illustration of the heart of a lost sinner when he repents and comes to Jesus. Read Luke 15:11-24. His past life was a life of sin, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Verse 13 says *"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."* In Ephesians 2:2-3, we read, *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh of wrath, even as others."* But he began to be in want; he needed something. The world about him could not help. Verse 15 says, *"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine."* But in verse 17 we see that he came to himself, or he realized the awful condition he was in away from his father. He realized that he was perishing. This is the way a sinner comes to Jesus. Sin separates from God and condemns the sinner to hell. The first thing that happens when a sinner comes to Jesus is...He knows he is lost!

Thus, he began to think. **(Repentance is a change of mind.)** In verses 18 and 19 we see a change in his thinking. He said, *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."* This is the true condition of every sinner who comes to Jesus. He feels his unworthiness and comes to God as the song says,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me
come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

So he arose and came to his father. Verse 20 says, *"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."* His thinking caused him to act. He did exactly what he thought to do. He came confessing as he came, "I have sinned, I am not worthy, but I am coming to be received."

The father received the son joyfully. He put his arms around him because of his love, and ordered the best robe be brought for him, a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet. He then began to eat with the lost son. They were reconciled, the son was no longer perishing but rejoicing with his father.

What a picture of the way Jesus receives the sinner who comes in like manner; lost and perishing with a sorrowful heart toward God. Jesus will receive you in love. He will take the perfect robe of His righteousness and cover you with it. *"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,"* Isaiah 61:10. *"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference,"* Romans 3:22. He will seal you with the Holy Spirit until He comes for you. *"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,"* Ephesians 4:30. He will put you to work in His vineyard to be a witness to other sinners of the grace of God. God will fellowship with any sinner who comes through Jesus Christ, depending on Him who suffered for his sins, who shed His blood and paid the awful price of sin, and who is a resurrected Saviour, exalted in heaven. *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,"* Hebrews 7:25.

Yes, this man will receive the sinner, but he must come God's way. Repent and believe the Gospel. Jesus, the Son of God made flesh, went to Calvary and died for our sins, was buried, resurrected, and is now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. The invitation of our Lord is "to come." Believe or receive Jesus as your Saviour. Come as the prodigal son--unworthy but coming anyway. This man will receive every sinner who comes to Him for mercy. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,"* Romans 10:13.