

GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE WORLD

BY W. STUART HARRIS



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GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE WORLD

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God's Provision for the World

SHALL WE turn to the tenth chapter of the letter to the Romans, reading from verse twelve. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

I was asked the other day, "How do you witness to a Jew?" Well, I always begin with the twelfth verse of Romans, chapter ten. If I can get a Jew to accept this, then I have a good ground-work for what needs to be said later. I remember once a Jew who waited after a service. He turned to me and said, "I never heard this message before. Tell me, is this really for me?" "Well," I said, "would you accept this word—there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek?" Yes, he accepted that, and it led on to him calling upon the Name of the Lord for salvation. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek"; each one is a sinner before God. "For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

Other titles in the series :

MORE GRACE THAN SIN
FIVE STEPS TO PENTECOST
SIX FOOHOLDS OF SATAN
THE MAN WHO RAN AWAY
WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN

The word, 'call' here, which occurs several times, reminds me of the time when I was in Czechoslovakia. They took this very literally, and in gospel meetings when the invitation was given, people were asked to stand and call audibly upon the Name of the Lord for salvation. It was a wonderful experience to hear, in various meetings, one and another stand and say, "Lord, save my soul." "For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."

Let us consider one of the questions that the Apostle asks here in this passage. It is the second question. "How shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard?" What provision has God made so that every person in the world and in every generation should hear the gospel? Has God made a full provision? God has certainly made an adequate provision, and I want us to consider carefully God's provision for a world in need.

THE CROSS OF CALVARY

Our Lord said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me." The world is in the Heart of God. Jesus Christ tasted death for every man. "He is the propitiation", the atoning Sacrifice, "for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation." What can we do when we find two truths in the Scriptures that we cannot relate? When we think of predestination, and then of the 'whosoever' gospel, what do we do? Well, I know what we must not do; we must not reject one of them! We take up the Bible as the Word of God and every truth is precious. When sometimes we are a little bit at a loss and we do not quite understand, we still believe, and we go on believing. It is amazing how the light begins to come. But never reject the truth: never throw overboard a statement of Scripture. I remember my dear father saying to me on one occasion, 'You know there is a verse in John,

chapter six, which reads like this, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" (verse thirty-seven). There you have the sovereign will of God. ". . . and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." There you have the free will of man!

The fact remains that here in the Word of God we have a gospel for the world, for Jesus Christ tasted death for every man. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." But, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." As we, therefore, look across the world we know that Calvary's Cross was for every person. This is the provision which God has made, through His beloved Son. What more?

THE COMMAND OF CHRIST

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And this is a command, not a suggestion; it is a command that comes to every believer, every one born of the Spirit of God. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Our Lord prefaced this command in Matthew's Gospel, chapter twenty-eight, with words concerning His authority, when He said, "All authority is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . ." On another occasion, when He looked upon the multitudes and saw them as sheep without a shepherd, He said, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." God has, therefore, made provision by the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and by the direction which He has given to His Church—the distinct, clear command that every person should hear the gospel; and that must apply to every generation. The Lord has left us in no doubt as to what we have to do.

THE INTERCESSION OF THE SON OF GOD

He is our great High Priest in the Heavenlies. 'But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore', (put a ring round that word, 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." And our Lord is at the right Hand of the Father, looking into the Face of the Father, on behalf of His own, the redeemed. On behalf of how many of the redeemed? On behalf of the redeemed who were saved when He reached the throne? For whom does our Lord intercede at the right Hand of God the Father? Let us remember that He loved the Church and He "gave Himself for it". In John's Gospel, chapter seventeen, I believe the Lord gives us the key to this. In that chapter, which is the great prayer of His heart before He faced the Cross, He says in verses twenty and twenty-one, praying to His Father: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word. That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." And so in the heart of the Saviour, before the throne of God, there is every believer, those who are coming to Him today, those who will come tomorrow, and those who will come right on until the time that He descends from Heaven, "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God". He knows His sheep. This has been one of the great incentives in evangelism for me personally, to know that Christ is praying in Heaven for those who are coming to Him. What other provision has God made?

THE CONVICTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our Lord said in John's Gospel, chapter sixteen, verse eight, "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"; not, He may do it, but He will do it. The Spirit of God is here for this distinct purpose of bringing this conviction, and every missionary

knows, as he goes out to witness for Christ across the world, that he can count on God. There are many occasions when God cannot count on us but there is never a time when we cannot count on God. The Holy Ghost has come to bring this conviction, as on the Day of Pentecost, they were pricked in the heart and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

THE PROMISES OF GOD

I have never counted them, but I understand there are some people who have counted the promises of the Word of God, and the number runs into many hundreds. All of these promises God has lavished upon us, that we might truly believe them. "My Word", He says, "shall not return unto Me void (empty) but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." And so we can find promises for the Word of God; we can find promises for the gospel of Jesus Christ; we can find promises for our daily provision; we can find promises for every circumstance of life. God has made such ample provision that none can say, "I cannot find a promise for this situation." The Apostle said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." And God has made it abundantly clear that there is no other gospel. In this provision God has been so explicit that we are left in no doubt that this is the only way: "There is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

And then the promises for the daily provision, how many there are, and how sweet and precious they are. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"—the promises of God.

THE DESTINY OF THE LOST

We have also been left in no doubt as to what is the condition of the lost, and this warning comes to us again and again through the Scriptures, from the Old and from the New Testament. We feel the urgency of witnessing for Jesus Christ, of bringing the message to the world, because without Christ a man has no hope. The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." And our Lord's own precious words in John's Gospel, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God." In that graphic description of the rich man in hell, we are told that the rich man in hell had two prayers, the first for himself, and the second for his five brothers, and neither of those prayers could have an affirmative answer. It was too late! "Now is the day of salvation." We must reach people now before they pass beyond the vale of death. This is the hour of salvation. God's provision is ample. We are humbled as we think of it, and I could continue describing the provision of God by which He has made it possible for every person in this world, in every generation to hear the gospel and have the opportunity of accepting Christ.

WHY HAS THE NEED NOT BEEN MET?

We have spoken of God's provision for world evangelization; but now what is the position today?

I had a letter some time ago from a missionary in France, and he said, "I have just heard from Paris of a sudden, remarkable demand for Tibetan Bibles. Tibetan being a sacred language, there are practically no other books but the Bible: thus the Chinese Communists now in Tibet are learning Tibetan by comparing Tibetan and Chinese Bibles. So anything could happen!" That might be a good focal point for our prayers.

When we think of the many pastors in prison, who knows what blessing may come out of these prison cells? A Political Officer said to a friend of mine, who was spending time in prison: "How long will you keep your stupid religion?" The reply was this, "Atheists die with regret." Then my friend, the Pastor, added, "Can we imagine a Christian calling to Marx or to Lenin to rescue him?" The Political Officer became quite angry, naturally; but the Pastor had not finished yet. He continued: "Do you send a cat to walk over a bridge that has just recently been constructed, to test it? No, you send a train over the bridge. And when God wants to test His servants, He puts them here in prison." What a testimony!

I received a letter from Turkey, the land in which the Apostle Paul travelled, and witnessed, and where he established churches. The dear missionary, who had just arrived there, wrote these words: "The challenge of Turkey is almost frightening—a whole nation practically untouched by the gospel! One can only explain the traditional Turkish resistance to the gospel in terms of the work of the prince of this world. We must earnestly and persistently pray that he may be bound, so that our Stronger Man may come in to get such spoil. It is not just that few workers are here, but there seems to be a Satanic influence at work to send them out of the country again for one reason or another." In the whole of the great city of Istanbul, with its 1,700,000 people, the number of born-again Turkish believers can be counted on two hands.

Let us face then the problem: why has the need not been met? If we think of the first sin mentioned in the Bible, when the serpent asked that first question of Eve, it is interesting that the devil should begin with the words, "Yea" —Yes—"hath God said?" Thus a doubt was sown in the mind of Eve, and when Eve responded and said, "God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die", the serpent added, "Ye shall not surely die." That is how it all began, and that is how it continues, for doubt was followed by disobedience, and still today one of the reasons why the world is not evangelized is simply because Christians have doubts

in their minds. They are not clear: they are not certain: they do not really believe that people are lost. It is the devil who says, "Ye shall not surely die." Have we imbibed some of his teaching instead of the teaching of the Word of God? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And so when the Apostle Paul was writing his letter to the Romans he said: "... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

IS IT THE COST?

I wonder whether the real problem is not the cost of it all? And this is rather surprising when we think of the cost of Calvary! How can a believer stand beneath the Cross of Jesus and then not be willing to give all to Christ? And yet it is true. Our Lord selected three disciples: Peter, James and John and He took them into the Garden with Him before Calvary. He told them to watch, and to pray, and they went to sleep. Somebody with sympathetic understanding will say, "Well, they were just tired out and exhausted; what else could they do?" But would our Lord have said, "Watch and pray," if they could not have done it? I have travelled on ships and have seen young people going to a dance at night. I know they have still been there at four o'clock in the morning! The world has energy for what it wants to do. "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" said Christ. And it was later that Peter denied Him. There is a cost in all of this, and we should not be surprised because the cost to Christ was infinite, as He laid down His life. He Who knew no sin was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In the early days of the Church they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. Is there a price to be paid? Is it going to cost me something? Well, we should feel like taking off our jackets and rolling up our sleeves, and saying, "Praise God for the opportunity!"

What a serious thing it was when Ananias and Sapphira kept back a part of the price! Peter said to them, first to Ananias, "Was it not thine own? Was it not in thine own power? Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Would we lie to the Holy Ghost? Would we give the impression to other people that we had given all when we had held back so much? I am not thinking just in terms of money and possessions, but of energy, and time and life, and plans!

I have a very precious Bible, which for many years belonged to the nephew of Frances Ridley Havergal, and her writing is in the front of the Bible. Her nephew, who became an Anglican minister, left me this Bible: his dear wife gave it to me when he passed on to be with the Lord. And there are some lovely notes right through the Scriptures. I remember on one occasion I was looking at the Scripture about the woman who was a sinner, and who brought an alabaster box of ointment, most precious. And there in the margin, the nephew of Frances Ridley Havergal had written: "A working man's wages for one year". And she "stood at His feet behind Him weeping". She could not face Him because she was a sinner. "And she washed His feet with her tears, and she wiped His feet with the hairs of her head, and she kissed His feet, and she anointed them with the ointment." Because she loved the Saviour she came to Him thus. How much do we love Him? What does He mean to us? How much would we give for Him?

ALL FOR JESUS?

Sister Eva of Friedenshort (in East Germany now, where there are more evangelicals proportionately than in West Germany) later known as Mother Eva, was at Keswick in the early days, and God was speaking to her. She heard God say to her very, very distinctly, "Give what thou hast." She would not obey immediately, and God said it again, "Give what thou hast." She did not have very much, and she looked

at her deaconess ring which was very precious. It had great sentimental value for her. Then she looked at her Bible which had one of those old, silver clasps on it, and she thought, "Surely, I am not going to give these things." But God spoke to her again, "Give what thou hast." When the meeting was almost over, just as they were singing the last hymn, she walked to the front in her deaconess clothes; she took off her ring and she laid it there; she took the silver clasp from her Bible and she laid it there. She went back and took her seat. Sixty-eight people walked out to the front of that 'Keswick' tent and laid their jewellery on the table. God was speaking to them. Obedience! Disobedience began in the Garden of Eden. Doubt and disobedience were the twin sins, and it is doubt and disobedience that are holding up the progress of the gospel through the world today.

During the last World War, when the Commonwealth stood alone, before America had come in, before Russia was really involved, that great statesman, Winston Churchill, took a secret journey across the Atlantic, at great risk to his own life, on the *Prince of Wales*. The battleship the *Prince of Wales* took him across to a rendezvous with President Roosevelt. On the way back, Churchill would go into the Map Room and there he could see those 'coffin' shaped objects, indicating the Nazi U-boats, following them like a pack of hounds. Churchill desired very much that he might see one of the convoys which was bringing food and supplies to beleaguered Britain. But he was told it was not possible, it would be too dangerous. Then it happened! As he stood there on the *Prince of Wales* he saw three great columns of seventy-two ships spread out for miles, and stood there with his fingers held aloft giving the 'V' sign. Cheers came from these ships as the battleship, making its way with attendant destroyers, passed right through the convoy to the encouragement of everybody in the convoy. And then a strange thing happened: the battleship turned round and went back again, and did it again! We see something there of the spirit of Churchill. He wanted to see it all over again! And then he

said, "What a delectable sight!" No one could waste a crust of bread, said the writer of the book, or think it smart to scrounge a pint of petrol after that, for we had witnessed the cost of our survival. Here were men endangering their own lives to bring us supplies. Who is there today who would hazard his life for Jesus Christ? God has made the provision. We all know something today of the position across the world, and we see something of the problem; it lies in the price that we are prepared to pay.

May I conclude by quoting a poem which is a variation of a well-known hymn. I first saw these remarkable verses in the U.S.A., which were published by the Great Commission Prayer League.

*There are ninety-and-nine that safely lie
In the shelter of the fold;
But millions are left outside to die,
For the ninety-and-nine are cold,
Away in sin's delusive snare,
Hastening to death and dark despair,
Hastening to death, and none to care,
For the ninety-and-nine are cold.*

*Lord, Thou hast here Thy well-fed sheep;
Are they not enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer, Millions sleep
On the brink of eternity!
And these My sheep within the fold
Care not for the dying in sin's stronghold,
Care not for the dying outside the fold,
On the brink of eternity!*

*But none of the ransomed ever knew
How the heart of the Saviour did yearn;
Nor the travail of soul that He passed through
For His sheep without concern.
For no other way had He to reach
The millions of earth His way to teach,
The millions of earth, except through each
Of His sheep without concern.*

*Lord, whence are those marks in Hands and Side?
And whence the scars on Thy Feet?
They were made for those for whom I died,
Both saved and wandering sheep.
Lord, when wilt Thou come to claim Thine own?
Not till the wand'ring the way are shown,
Not till the dying My Word hath known,
My wandering, dying sheep.*

*Ah! ninety-and-nine, dost Thou hear His Voice?
Forth then to the work so great;
Beyond life's span there is no choice
For those outside the gate.
If they're brought at all, it must be now,
Then, ninety-and-nine, don't question how,
Oh! sheep of Mine, go quickly thou,
Else for them, and you, too late!*

*But all through the churches apostate-riven
And up from the world's rough steep
There'll arise a glad cry to the gate of Heaven,
Rejoice, I'm finding My sheep!
And the angels shall echo around the Throne,
Rejoice, for the dying the way are shown,
Rejoice, for the Shepherd brings back His own,
His wandering, perishing sheep.*

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