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General Revelation

If you speak to unbelievers much at all you will eventually get a question that goes something like this: “How can this God of yours who you say is such a good, loving God send decent people to hell just because they have never heard about Jesus Christ?” Many Christians are also confused about this issue although they would not phrase the question that way. Disregard the two theological errors in the question concerning the assumption that there are decent people in God’s sight (there aren’t; Rom. 3:23) and that God sends people to hell (Mt. 25:41). Hell was prepared for Satan and his demons and no human being need end up there. Everyone is a sinner who falls short of the glory of God and people are bound for the lake of fire because they are sinners in their father Adam who reject Christ and apart from Christ there is no remedy for their sin problem. But there is an answer to this question concerning the eternal destiny of those who have never heard of Christ Jesus. The Bible is very clear that every person knows God and has the opportunity to believe in Him and be saved. Let’s examine what the Scriptures reveal to us about this situation.

Romans 3:23 ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Matthew 25:41 ⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

The problem for people who wish to deny their culpability in eternal matters is that God has revealed Himself to everyone, everywhere, in all stages of history without exception. The Bible reveals this truth to us through a doctrine called general revelation. In this way, God provides the knowledge of

Himself to all mankind through nature, history, and the human conscience. Because this knowledge is available to every human being, every human being is without excuse. One day when they stand before the righteous Judge of the universe no excuse for unbelief will be tolerated or accepted.

The first thing we will examine is that God reveals Himself in nature. Have you ever looked up at a beautiful night sky or across vast expanses of land from a mountaintop and thought something like this: "What an amazing God who created all this? How can anyone possibly doubt that God exists?" I've thought that and I've heard other Christians express that very same thought. The fact is that no one can look into the heavens or across the fruited plains or from the mountaintops and doubt or deny the existence of God. Now they say they don't believe in God; they just can't mean it because we will see that they really do know God but they are deliberately and willfully denying Him. They are lying to themselves when they deny God. We can see God's presence and the evidence of His creative powers all around us in the wonders of the created universe. The Psalmist makes this very clear to us in Psalm 19:1-6. Psalm 19:1-6 ¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ²Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. ³There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. ⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, ⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. ⁶Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. These verses could not be clearer. God and His glory are on display day and night throughout the earth. Glory, קְבוֹד, means honor, glory, majesty, wealth; it is the attribution of high status to a person and a manifestation of power. This Scripture does not tell us that only certain people are able to see the glory of God in the heavens; it tells us that everyone without exception is able to see His glory. God's majesty is evident and made manifest to everyone in the realm of His visible creation. It is as though God has placed an open book in the heavens that is a visible proclamation of His presence and of His creative power. He is declaring Himself not just to believers but to the people of the entire world. These things should be and actually are obvious to the human mind; the creation itself is a declaration and a revelation of the Creator God and all the people of the world know it.

David goes on to inform us in Psalm 19 that God is continually revealing Himself day and night. He is always at work showing Himself to the people of the world. The word translated “pour” in verse 2 in the NASB could be translated “utter” as it is in the KJV. God is continually speaking to us day and night through His created universe yet this is speech without words; in a way, it is a universal sign language. In a figurative sense, the universe is doing the talking for the Creator apart from the special revelation of the Bible which many people admittedly do not have access to or simply reject. But they all have the world around them. Creation is an uninterrupted, inexhaustible fountain of revelation that has been present from the beginning of time. It was revelation taking place in the Garden of Eden and it was revelation expressed after the Fall. It was revelation throughout what we consider to be ancient history and it was revelation in the Dark Ages. It was revelation last century, it is revelation today, and it will be revelation tomorrow. God never stops revealing Himself as He draws people to Him and His creation is continually active in that drawing ministry. This is revelation that is apart from the spoken and written word; every person of every language in every stage of history can perfectly understand the language of creation, the revelation of the Creator God in and through the created world.

Geography is no barrier to knowing God through His creation. There is no corner of the earth that has been left unexposed to the truth of God that is continually put on display. From north to south and from east to west, no human being can claim ignorance of God based on their location on planet earth. God is there and He is revealed in the daylight and He is revealed in the moon light and He is revealed in the heavens. He is revealed on the plains and He is revealed in the mountains. He is revealed in the highland forests and He is revealed in the equatorial rain forests. He is revealed in the arctic cold and He is revealed in the desert heat. He is revealed through the birds, the reptiles, the mammals, and the fish. He is revealed in the oceans and He is revealed on the continents. There is no place man can escape the revelation He has provided to us through His creation. God is there now and God is there always.

Psalm 139:7–9 ⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. ⁹If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, ¹⁰Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

The word for “line” in Psalm 19:4 is the word for a measuring line; therefore, it is the standard by which other things are measured. In this case, this knowledge of God that is displayed within the creation is the foundation for life. God is the standard by which life should be measured. Everything that deviates from or denies this standard is in error. God’s standard is never in error.

David used two similes in Psalm 19 concerning the sun to further express these truths. The first is a comparison with the Jewish wedding. Just as the bridegroom comes out of the bridal chamber to announce the consummation of his marriage, the sun rises in the east every morning to proclaim the existence of the Creator God who made the sun and the heavens it faithfully transits every day. The second simile is a comparison with a runner about to run a race. Just as the runner knows his strength is sufficient to run his race, the sun has the power to complete its circuit every day as it gives witness to God. Even those creatures that cannot see the sun feel its heat and are exposed to its witness of God.

God has also revealed Himself to all mankind by virtue of the fact that He blesses the world with good things and sends rains that bring about fruitful seasons that satisfy all people with food and gladness.

Acts 14:15–17 ¹⁵and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. ¹⁶“In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; ¹⁷and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

When these pagans at Lystra saw the healing miracle of Paul and Barnabas, they believed the apostles to be gods and wanted to offer sacrifices to them. The first reaction of the apostles was to tell them to turn from these vain things and to embrace the living God who created the heavens and the earth. God had not forced the Gentiles to be under the Mosaic Law but had allowed them to go their own way. But even then, God was not without a witness to them in that He gave good things to all the people of the world. This too is the

general revelation of God contained within nature and it is a message to all people.

The Bible also informs us that every person knows God because God has placed the knowledge of Himself within them. The only reason people deny God is because they deliberately, willingly, knowingly, reject Him. The creation clearly reveals Him but people refuse to acknowledge Him.

Romans 1:18–20 ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

People who reject God's existence inevitably turn to ungodliness, ἀσέβεια, which is the state of living in a manner contrary to proper religious beliefs and practices and they also turn to unrighteousness, ἀδικία, which is simply doing what is unjust. People who reject God live like this; their lives are characterized by ungodliness and unrighteousness no matter how upright and moral they might appear to be in general to other people. This state exists because they have deliberately suppressed the truth of God's existence. It is crucial to our understanding of this issue to realize that this rejection of God is born of desire and not of ignorance; they know what they are doing when they reject and deny God. Paul goes on to explain these concepts of ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Concerning ungodliness, he writes:

Romans 1:21–23, 25 ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.... ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Concerning unrighteousness, Paul writes:

Romans 1:24, 26-32 ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them....
²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. ²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

This is where we are because of the wholesale rejection of God not only in our country but in the world and not only there but even in the church as well. There are innumerable churches in existence today where the revelation of God has been rejected and the gospel of grace is not believed.

Paul makes it clear that people know God but he also makes it perfectly clear that people are deliberately rebelling against Him and against His authority. Suppressing the truth is a deliberate act; it is not the action of a person who is simply ignorant of God. People are not ignorant; people are in rebellion. People deliberately forget about and reject God and they not only fail to honor and glorify Him but conversely they purposely dishonor Him, and people are dismissive of and ungrateful for the blessings He gives to all of us saved and unsaved alike. The truth people are suppressing is the very knowledge of God that He has so graciously provided everyone. Truth, ἀλήθεια, is the content of that which is true and this in accordance with what actually happened; it consists of facts that correspond to a reality whether historical (in the time/space continuum) or an eternal reality not related to historical fact. The problem for those who suppress the truth is that God has made this eternal reality evident to them and they reject it anyway. They even know the

penalty for their rebellion is death and they still rebel and encourage others to rebel alongside them.

It is vitally important for us to understand that people have a problem with their will and not with their intellect. You must understand that fact when dealing with unbelievers. They know and understand God but they willingly reject Him. It is never a problem with an intellect that cannot believe in the existence of God; it is always a problem with a volitional desire to reject and to deny Him. The smokescreen they will put up, however, is that they must reject God based on intellectual factors as they think they see them. They think they are wise but in reality they are only foolish. In our age, evolution is the primary intellectual factor people rely on to reject God. It is widely accepted as fact so it is an easy, acceptable to the world excuse. Ultimately, the problem for them is that there will be no excuse when they finally face the righteous Judge. He will see through the subterfuge and He will know they willingly rejected Him. And not only that, they will know He knows they willingly rejected Him! But at that point, they will finally admit Jesus is Lord. It is just a shame that it will come too late.

Philippians 2:9–11 ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

People do what is unjust, that is, unrighteous, as the consequence of rejecting God. They substitute their personal humanistic philosophy of life and values for the revealed truth of God. By rejecting God, they are rejecting the knowledge that would cause them to change their humanistic philosophy and they do not want to change. I have read statements from evolutionists who admit this fact. They acknowledge that evolution cannot be true but to embrace biblical creationism is to acknowledge God and His existence and to submit to Him and this they are unwilling to do. It is not intellect that informs their decision; it is their will to keep living life on their terms separated from God that informs their decision. That is what they want to do and that is what they choose to do.

God's wrath is kindled against those who are in rebellion against Him because God has made the knowledge of Him evident within every person.

Everyone knows God despite their denial of Him. This is why presuppositional apologetics are so important. Most systems of apologetics start with trying to prove the existence of God to unbelievers. The problem with this approach is they already know He exists because He has already revealed Himself to them. Why would we waste time trying to convince a person of something he or she already knows? We shouldn't. Presuppositional apologetics recognizes the futility of unbiblical thought and rebellion against God; therefore, we always begin from the standpoint that God exists and that He has spoken truth that is available to us through the created order and through His Word. This approach to apologetics is perfectly in accord with what we have read in Romans chapter 1.

The word “known”, γνωστός, means pertaining to being able to be known; what can be known, what is evident, or what can be clearly seen. This knowledge, provided by God to man, is perfectly intelligible to human beings and it can be recognized by them. God is knowable and understandable because He has made Himself knowable and understandable.

Further, this knowledge is evident to all people. “Evident”, φανερός, means pertaining to being clearly and easily able to be known; clearly known, easily known, evident, plain, or clear. This knowledge is not made known to people who cannot comprehend it; all people are totally capable of recognizing God because it is God who has made Himself known to them and He has insured that His revelation is comprehended by the human mind. In the process of making this knowledge evident to people, God has caused it to be fully known by revealing it clearly and in great detail. In other words, there can be no question in any person's mind concerning the existence of God. The only question is whether or not they will acknowledge Him, believe in Him, and submit to Him.

God wants people to know He exists; the invisible God has made Himself known through the agency of His visible creation. Things that people cannot physically see—His invisible attributes, His eternal power, and His divine nature—are clearly made known by God in the created universe. These things are understood meaning people not only know them they have insight into their meaning. People intellectually understand; therefore, Paul is again informing us that intellect is not the problem, the will is the problem.

After the created order, meaning nature, the second aspect of general revelation is history. The Bible clearly provides examples of historical events guided by God and used by Him to reveal Himself to all people.

God specifically said that His judgments on Egypt prior to the Exodus would clearly prove His existence to the Egyptians.

Exodus 7:4–5 ⁴“When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵“The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.”

The Egyptians were going to know, as a result of the judgments of God, that the God of Israel, who is the God of history, was the one true God.

God also revealed Himself to the Canaanites through the judgments on Egypt and through His subsequent leadership of the Israelites in the wilderness and the Canaanites were scared silly. Rahab admitted this to the Israelite spies.

Joshua 2:9–11 ⁹and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. ¹⁰“For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹“When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

The Canaanites believed—not in the sense of salvation belief—but in the sense that they recognized the general revelation of God through the historical events of the Exodus concerning His identity—and they were terrified because they knew He was God and He could not be thwarted.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of general revelation through history is God’s dealings with Israel. It has been a completely miraculous work of God that the Jewish people have survived and that the nation has been reestablished in our time—and the world has taken notice. It is no accident that tiny Israel

is despised and persecuted by the God rejecting world. From Satan's attack on the people of the world in order to destroy the Messianic line prior to the flood, to slavery in Egypt, to the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests, to the diaspora, to the pogroms of Europe and Russia, to the persecution of the Jews by the Roman Catholic Church and then by the Protestant churches subscribing to replacement theology, to the hatred of the Jewish people by Islam, the Jews are hated because their very existence reveals God to mankind. They are a constant and visible historical revelation of God.

Israel is the only nation in the history of the world to be created by God and the world knows it. Israel was specially created by God for God to show Himself through that nation to the world.

Isaiah 49:3, 6 ³He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory."... ⁶He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

The fact that Israel largely failed in this effort does not mean the nation completely failed. To this day, people refer to the people of Israel as the Chosen People. And let's not forget that our Savior came from the nation Israel. Some people look at historical events apart from Israel and see God's revelatory hand in those things such as great victories in various wars or even the founding of America, and that may be true but those are subjective determinations on the part of man apart from the revelation of God. Israel is clearly a historical revelation of God that continues to reveal Him to the world to this very day. The establishment of the modern nation of Israel in 1948 is an immensely important factor in historical general revelation.

In their rebellion against God, people reject the general revelation He has provided through the existence of the Jewish people and the modern state of Israel. They reject the idea that God is the God of history.

The third way God uses general revelation to reveal Himself to mankind is through the human conscience.

Romans 2:14–15 ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts,

their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

Every person is born with a conscience that guides them concerning right and wrong. Even though they reject God, they have a moral compass that is always operative within them and it is holding them accountable for what they do and don't do and that moral compass comes only from God. When they act contrary to the positive dictates of this moral compass they feel guilt. This is why so many criminals confess their crimes to the police when it is in their obvious self-interest to keep their mouth shut; they are unburdening their conscience.

The revelation of God through the conscience can be short circuited when a person continually sins and sears the conscious to the point of rendering it nearly inoperative and this can happen to believers as well.

1 Timothy 4:1–2 ¹But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ²by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

Another problem that is huge in our country today and affects all people is the influence of the culture on the moral consciousness which assists in the process of searing the conscience. When people are constantly bombarded by moral depravity in the popular culture, whether it is on TV, in music, in the movies, or among celebrities and politicians, and it is then reinforced by a secular humanist educational system, the sense of right and wrong changes. God's intrinsic moral standards, while still there, are repressed and altered. Apart from God, people are indoctrinated into the culture.

Through the truth of general revelation, it is easy to understand the religious nature of mankind. No matter where you go in the world, there is a religion of some sort; most of it is pagan to be sure, but it is religion nonetheless. People have the instinctive knowledge of God and because they reject the one true God, they must express that knowledge in some way. It may be through the earliest of the pagan cults which was the Babylonian mother child cult instituted by Nimrod and his wife Semiramis that spread around the world and is still with us today. It may be the worship of exalted religious figures

such as Buddha. It may be animal and ancestor worship. It may be the worship of a god who represents a corrupted view of the one true God such as that expressed in Islam; Allah is not the God of the Bible. The Muslim doctrine of God is a corruption of the biblical doctrine of the one true God. Mormonism does the same thing when it teaches that Jesus became a god and that man can become a god. Even secular humanist, atheistic, evolutionists worship a god of their own making—they worship human beings with their principal god being themselves. It is the worship of the creation rather than the worship of the Creator. It is a total rejection of the Creator/creature distinction. But when people reject the God of the Bible they must invent a god to take His place; they must acknowledge God even as they are in the process of rejecting Him. It is our task as Christians to direct the innate knowledge of God that everyone possesses to the one true God of the Bible and to His Son Christ Jesus.

It is clear then, that people, through general revelation, have enough knowledge to know God but absent special revelation they cannot come to the truth they have so long rejected. General revelation does not convey the truth about the Christ.

The final noteworthy truth concerning general revelation is that it renders the unbeliever without excuse before God.

Romans 1:20 ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

This is the reason why a person who has never heard of Jesus Christ can be held accountable for unbelief. They know God but they have rejected Him and refused to accept and believe the truth that could save them. The fact is they could have been saved if they had sought the truth instead of rejecting it for the lie. A person seeks the truth by responding to the light of the revelation given to him or her by God and they will be given more revelation until they come face to face with Jesus Christ. The question then becomes, can or will people seek God? Most people, including Christian pastors and theologians, would probably say, “No.” For those who say that, they ignore one powerful factor: God the Father is constantly drawing people to Him and when people hear the name of Jesus, He is drawing them to Him and when people hear the gospel, the Holy Spirit is convicting them. Man will not do this completely

of his own will but a person can respond to the general revelation of God as He uses it to draw people to Him.

John 6:44 ⁴⁴“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Who is it who is drawn by God the Father and comes to Jesus? In the context of this Scripture, it is about drawing people to God through the Word of God but general revelation is the foundation of this drawing ministry because it comes long before anyone ever hears the Word. General revelation is a preparatory ministry prior to hearing the Word. Once a person responds to the revelation given, more revelation will be provided.

For an example of God’s drawing ministry, when Adam rebelled the first thing he did was hide from God. Most theologians use that to say that our only inclination as sinners separated from God is to run, hide, and reject God and left to ourselves that is quite true. But they forget one fact; what happened immediately after the Fall? God came down into the Garden and sought Adam out and said, “Where are you?” God was drawing Adam, who was now in a state of sin, a state of rebellion, a state of spiritual death which is complete separation from God, and a state of unbelief, back to Him but most theologians downplay or even ignore the second part of this Scripture. Genesis 3:8–9 ⁸They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”

God went to this sinful, rebellious couple and sought them out. In effect, He was saying to Adam, “Where are you? Come back. I love you. We need to talk Adam.” Adam positively responded to God’s call and he was forgiven, granted eternal life, and restored to fellowship with God. And God is saying, through general revelation, the same thing to every other person who has ever lived on the face of planet earth, “Where are you? Come to me. I love you. We need to talk.”

God’s drawing ministry is operative among all people at all times because it is His desire that no one should perish.

1 Timothy 2:3–4 ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Through the cross, people will come to faith in Christ and it is through the cross that Jesus draws people to Him when they hear the truth about Him. Jesus enlightens every person in the world with the light of revelation and every human being since the cross has, without exception, been enlightened by His light. This too is a constantly operating ministry throughout the world.

John 12:32 ³²“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

John 1:9 ⁹There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

The Holy Spirit, as a person hears the gospel of the Christ, draws them to God through His ministry of convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

John 16:8 ⁸“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

Through the drawing and convicting ministry of the triune Godhead, all people are constantly being drawn to the God they already know but have willingly rejected. If they respond to the light given, they will be given more light one way or another until they are face to face with Christ and in a position to make a decision concerning the good news of their eternal salvation. If they reject the light given, no additional light will be forthcoming unless and until they respond to what they already have. Think of this drawing ministry of God as a continuum that starts small as a person responds and grows in intensity and magnitude until they either accept or reject the gospel. But along the way, a person is free to walk away and refuse to further respond to God as He draws them to Him. That’s why, in John 12:32, Jesus said He will draw all men to Himself but in John 6:44, He is saying that all those drawn will be raised up meaning all those who believe. Along the way, many people reject further revelation and remain spiritually dead, eternally separated from God.

John 6:44 ⁴⁴“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

When unbelievers respond to the light of general revelation, they begin to grope around in order to find God and God honors their response by giving them more revelation. Paul alluded to this in his sermon to the Greek intellectuals on Mars Hill in Athens.

Acts 17:27 ²⁷that they [the people of the nations] would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

God expects people to recognize Him through His work in the creation and to seek more information about Him and when they do He will provide the additional information they seek. Clearly, unbelievers can and do seek information based on the light they have received even if it is only the light of general revelation as revealed in God's creation. We have the examples in the book of Acts of the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48) and of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Cornelius became acquainted with God apparently through the Jewish people and he believed the light he received. That was rewarded by a visit from an angel followed by the presence of the apostle Peter who preached the gospel which brought this seeking Gentile face to face with the truth of Christ and he believed. Once he believed his household believed. The Ethiopian eunuch had come to believe in the God of the Jews and went to Jerusalem to worship that God. The recognition of that light was acknowledged when God sent more revelatory light to him in the person of Philip who brought this African man face to face with the knowledge of the risen Christ and he believed.

Let me give you a personal anecdote that is a more current example. When I was a police officer, there were a large number of flop house motels all along old Route 66 in Albuquerque. These seedy places were homes to burglars, thieves, alcoholics, drug addicts, and prostitutes. Only God knows the answer to this question, but how many of those down and out societal outcasts, in a moment of despair, cried out to God for help and was divinely directed to that Gideon's Bible that was in the nightstand of every room in every one of those old run down, fleabag motels? When they cried out to God in response to the revelation of God they already had about the God they already knew, whether it was through general or special revelation, they received more as He divinely directed them to that Bible. If they wanted more after that, I'm

sure they got it until they too came face to face with the risen Savior. God alone knows how many desperate human beings were seeking the Creator God and found Him in one of those Bibles in one of those flop house motels and then continued seeking more light until they were saved. I'm sure that is a story that can be replicated in every city in this country.

But clearly, from these examples, we can see that the drawing ministry of God operates along a continuum until a person comes to faith or until they reject further revelation and walk away. It may happen suddenly or it may take years, but God doesn't give up. He is the God who is there.

I am not saying that unsaved, spiritually rebellious people seek God totally on their own initiative, but I am saying that as they respond to the drawing ministry of God that is always active in and around them and begin to seek Him in response to the light they intrinsically know, God responds in turn by providing them with more light. Whether He leads them directly to the Word of God or indirectly to the Word of God through a church or an evangelist or through a Christian friend or family member or to a missionary or to whatever it is He will use to give them more light, He will honor the fact that they are seeking Him and one way or another they will hear the good news of the saving grace of God through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That applies to all people in all places. God will make a way in whatever way He sees fit to do it but it does have to lead in some way to the Word of God, whether presented in print or in person, because Romans 10:17 tells us this: ¹⁷"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." The drawing ministry of God is accomplished primarily through the Word of God, which is special revelation, but the foundation for this ministry is the knowledge of God that He has placed within His creation and within the heart of every person, which is general revelation, and every person is held accountable for their own fate because of this knowledge God provides in general revelation. That is the answer to the question with which we began this sermon.

If you are here today and you have never placed your faith in Jesus Christ or if you are an unbeliever who is listening to this sermon on the internet, you are here today in this church or you are listening to this church's web site for a reason. You have responded in some fashion to the drawing ministry of the God who loves you and God is responding back to you by placing you in a

place where you are going to hear the saving message of the gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is our problem: we are all sinners eternally separated from God because He cannot have anything sinful and unrighteous in His presence. That means we are not qualified as human beings to be in His presence and further, there is nothing we can do to make ourselves acceptable to Him in order to be in His presence. The really bad news is that the penalty for sin is death and we are incapable of paying that penalty on our own behalf. We need a sinless Mediator, a sinless human being, to pay that debt for us. There is nothing we can do in terms of being religious or being a good person or doing good works that can make us acceptable to God.

But the good news is that God in His grace and mercy has made a way for us to be reconciled back to Him. God became a Man, lived a sinless life, died to pay our sin debt, and He promised that everyone who believes in who Jesus is and in what He did will be granted eternal life. We cannot earn it—in fact, trying to earn it neutralizes it and defeats it—and we don't deserve it; He just gives it to us when we believe in the person and work of Christ. And belief is not a work; Romans 4:1-5 makes that perfectly clear.

Romans 4:1–5 ¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” ⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

BELIEF IS NOT A WORK!

Here is the situation:

1. Each one of us is a sinner eternally separated from God, spiritually dead, and unable to save ourselves.
2. To solve the problem, God the Son, Christ Jesus, became a man through the virgin birth, He is 100% God and 100% man, and He lived a sinless life. This qualified Him to pay the penalty for the sin

of all mankind. This is a debt He did not owe paid on behalf of those who owe the debt but cannot pay it and that is every one of us without exception.

3. 2,000 years ago on a Mount called Calvary in a city called Jerusalem and in a nation called Israel, Jesus Christ died a horrible death on a cross to pay the sin debt owed by you and owed by me.

4. As proof that He died, He was buried.

5. As proof that His substitutionary, sacrificial death was acceptable to God as payment for our sin debt, yours and mine, He was raised from the dead.

6. God's promise is that all who believe and personally appropriate these truths as applicable to themselves will be granted eternal life.

To sum up:

Saving faith is the belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God who died and rose again to pay one's personal penalty for sin and the one who gives eternal life to all who trust Him and Him alone for it.

It is by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus who is the Christ alone as He is identified in the Bible alone that enables us to be granted eternal life and to be reconciled to God. It is belief in Christ Jesus plus nothing.

There is nothing for us to do; there is nothing we can do; Jesus Christ has done it all. Our only responsibility is to believe that who Jesus is and what He did applies personally to each one of us as an individual separated from God and needing salvation.

The question is this: Do you believe you are a sinner eternally separated from God and therefore spiritually dead and that Christ Jesus paid your sin debt on that cross and that based on your belief/faith/trust in Him and in Him alone He will grant you eternal life and this apart from any good works and religious acts you have done, are doing, or will ever do?

If you believe that, if you have trusted in Him alone for eternal life, you are born again and you are granted that eternal life and can now stand in the presence of a holy, righteous God.

And this not because of anything you have done, are doing, or will ever do but because of everything Jesus Christ has done on your behalf.

This is an act performed by God that happens in an instant in time and you can never lose it. The moment you believe you possess eternal life.

If you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for your eternal life, won't you please consider it right now? Every one of us has a date with our eternal destiny, and not a one of us

knows when that will be. This life is the only chance you have to believe and to obtain eternal life and there is no guarantee any one of us has another day. You may not have another day to live;

you may not even another hour to live, and you may not ever have another chance after this moment to believe in Jesus for your eternal salvation. Today is the day; now, this very moment, is the time. It is a private transaction between you and God that you can make right now, right where you are, simply by believing these truths I have just presented to you here this morning. You don't have to walk an aisle or say a prayer or tell anyone or do anything else; you simply have to believe.

Jesus died for you, a sinner dead in your sins. Do you believe it? I really pray you do.

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