

Romans 10:13 in the Navajo Bible

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Háálá t'áálá'í jínítínígo Bóhólnííhii bízhi' dajózhúigo sodazdilzinígíí éí yisdáhwiinííł.
(Romans 10:13)¹

[F]or, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).²

Introduction

Here Paul says that, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." And yet Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). What is the relationship between these two passages?

In Matthew 7:21 Jesus is describing people who profess to know Him, but who really don't. In another place Jesus says, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). In this paper we'll talk about what this means. Our purpose will be to place Romans 10:13 in a context that brings out its meaning clearly.

Some Background

Jesus

Knowing Jesus means following Him. If we say we know him but don't do the things that He says, we really don't know Him. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' [*kurie kurie*] and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

In the story of the ten virgins, ten brought oil for their lamps and ten did not. When the bridegroom was delayed longer than they expected, those who had no oil went to buy some. When they got back, the bridegroom had already come and the door was shut.

"Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'" (Matthew 25:11)

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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In Greek what the five foolish virgins say is, "*kurie kurie*" ("Lord! Lord!"). The word is translated, "Sir," but it's the same word that Christ uses elsewhere in Matt 7:21-22 and Luke 6:46.

What did the foolish virgins do wrong? Consider vs. 6: "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" (Matthew 25:6). When they heard this the five wise virgins went out to meet Him, but the five foolish virgins did not. They went off to buy the oil they should have had all along. They were confident that they knew the Bridegroom and that He knew them – confident enough that they could rest in this relationship along with the other bridesmaids. But when the time came when all of this mattered most, they did not follow the Bridegroom into the wedding feast.

When the Bridegroom told them, "I don't know you" (vs. 11), that surprised them. Why did it surprise them? Because they thought He did know them. They were secure in that knowledge. But they were wrong.

Paul

Paul has something else in mind when he says, "for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Romans 10:13). This statement is quoted from an earlier passage written by the prophet Joel.

And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:32)

Joel is talking about people responding and turning to the Lord. If we were to try to state the principle being described in this verse in terms of the story of the ten virgins, it would be something like rising up and going out to meet the Bridegroom.

Discussion

The five foolish virgins had an inner sense of security. The point is not that they were wrong all along. This is how the story would be explained by those who emphasize the doctrine of eternal security. The point is that they had accepted the Bridegroom and were wrong in sincerely thinking they knew Him and that He knew them – that they had a saving relationship with the Bridegroom..

Two Models for Security

The eternal security model

If we say the five foolish bridesmaids were wrong about their salvation from the beginning, is it possible for others to be wrong? If you can live like a Christian for years and be wrong all that time, how secure is the teaching about eternal security. Those who accept this teaching are eternally secure, unless they were never really saved to start with. How secure is that? In the eternal security model ne can never be entirely sure which of these two choices applies. It's one or the other, but which?

The point of emphasis in the eternal security model is that those who are saved are eternally saved, and this is reassuring. But what does it hold out for those that are lost? If you're saved, the model works well. And it appears to be Christ centered. You're not saved because you're good, but because God chose you. OK. But what if He didn't choose you? In this case you try to come to Christ but it doesn't work. You might even live what looks like a Christian life, but in fact all this time you're lost and damned.

This is the down side of the teaching, and it's really perverse. You want to come to Christ in a saving relationship, but you can't. And there's no way this can ever change. Nothing you do can change your situation before God, and what you can't do God won't do. He sees your desire to know Him and serve Him, but too bad. He doesn't want you. Never mind that you desperately need Him. You're not on His list.

It's all well and good to emphasize the positive side to the eternal security model, and it does have a positive side. I admit it. But there's no such thing as a coin with only one side and, in the same way, the teaching of eternal security has a down side. The down side is every bit as bad as the up side is good.

It also has a gaping weakness. That's the part about never being sure whether your salvation was real in the first place. If it was, you're set. Never in all eternity can you be taken out of God's hands. And if it wasn't? How would you know? And in the absence of such knowledge, how much security does the model really make available? And if you weren't really saved – if you just think you are – there's absolutely nothing you can do to change your situation. In fairness I think we would have to say that this model has some weaknesses.

The response model

The best thing about the eternal security model is that it isn't true. It's just not biblical. When Jesus says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16), He means it. The word "whoever" includes you. If you take Jesus at His word and put your trust in Him, you can have eternal life.

Your salvation does not depend on a decision made about you in some other part of the universe. God's decision concerning you was made long ago, and you don't have to wonder what it is. You can know this by looking at the cross. God has already forcefully stated His position by allowing His Son to die in your place. But no relationship has only one side any more than a coin has only one side. If you want a warm and loving relationship with Jesus, you're going to have to respond to Him. In view of what Jesus has already done for you on the cross, that's the decision you need to think about.

Discussion

This is a gospel for the rest of us. If some feel that they're saved because God chose them, it is true that He did. We can't just say this much and quit though. The rest of it is that He also chose us. Is this too good to be true? Did God really choose everyone? How much proof do you need? If seeing what Jesus did for you on the cross won't convince you, nothing will.

In this context, what does Paul mean when he says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13)? What he doesn't mean is that everyone will be saved. Why not? If salvation is freely available for literally everyone, why wouldn't everyone be saved? Yes. Why wouldn't they? That's a searching question. The lack of any meaningful answer to this question is what brings the wrath of God when the wicked are finally destroyed. He did everything for these people that could possibly be done and they still weren't interested. So why won't everyone be saved? Because not everyone is willing to call on the name of the Lord – in the sense of this passage.

Conclusion

There's no such thing as a person who has to be lost. What this means is that there's no reason in the world why *you* would ever need to be lost, if you respond to what God has done for you.

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."
(Isaiah 45:22)

People who are eventually lost – and I grant that many will be – are lost not because God didn't choose them. He chose them. They're lost because they didn't choose Him. God has a place for you in His kingdom if you will accept it as the free gift that it is.