

You must be born again.

Recent events in the Middle East have caused many of us to rise up in righteous indignation against those who commit heinous atrocities against innocent people. We view evil people as deserving of Hell. It is easy to understand how God can save us, because we are not nearly as evil as they are. It is a lot more difficult for us to envision God saving militant Islamic Jihadists, especially those who commit murder and rape for the sheer pleasure of it.

It helps me, personally, to understand that sin is a form of blindness. Islamic Jihadists are no different than the Apostle Paul who believed he was serving God by persecuting Christians. Moderate Moslems today are very much like the Jews of Jesus' day, who practiced a very legalistic form of religion. Non-religious people who commit acts of atrocity out of pure self-interest are also blinded. They think that their crimes serve their self-interest, and they are unable to empathize with the feelings of those whom they are hurting. Lack of empathy is a form of blindness. When we judge these people as not worthy of salvation, we fail to realize that they are inherently good in their innermost being, in their spirits, but in their carnal existence in the flesh they suffer from a disease of blindness that may be instantly cured by God when the timing is right. Paul makes this case in Romans 7 & 8.

For those of you who have read up on the Near Death Experience (NDE), you know that during the life review, the subject relives every moment of his/her life, and experiences it from two perspectives, their personal perspective and also from the perspective of those whose lives they touched. For the first time ever, some are able to completely empathize with the feelings of others. During this exercise, God removes the blinders and restores their spiritual sight. When we shed our mortal bodies and put on immortality, we leave the fleshly, sinful body behind. For most, this happens very soon after death. Others cling to more tightly to their earthly existence and experience a "Hell" of their own making after death, but eventually the love of God reaches them and they are rescued from the illusion of Hell, and God opens their eyes to the truth.

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 2 Cor. 4:3-4

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:7-8

"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me." Romans 7:14-20

"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter

a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' John 3:3-8

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39