

Secret Death-bed Repentance

Some promote the idea that we cannot say that a departed non-Christian went to hell, in that, though he was a sinner, he might have repented secretly just before he died. Is it right? Here are some thoughts on unknown or secret death-bed repentance...

1. We must remember the fact that the individual gave us no reason to think he did repent. To think the person might have repented is mere speculation.
2. The Bible does not encourage comfort from such thinking – that the departed might have made some secret repentance.
3. The Bible makes salvation contingent upon a public confession (Rom 10:9,10).
4. The Bible boldly assumes men perish if there is no reason to think they repented, for example
 - a. Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:25, John 17:12) and
 - b. the false workers (Php 3:19), "their end is destruction", and (2 Cor 11:15), "their end is according to their deeds."
5. The devil would like to promote such thinking, as he would rob God of His glory, the glory God would get from
 - a. putting the person in hell (Rom 9:22), or from
 - b. receiving a confession, as in the case of the thief on the cross (Luke 23:40).
6. Any sinner would like to hear such thinking, for it would encourage him to continue in his sin and then slip into heaven the way the deceased presumably did. After all, that is what these Christians are saying and hoping and they claim to be 'in the know.'
7. Death-bed repentance is rare anyway. "There is one death bed repentance recorded in the Bible that no one despair, but there is only one instance that no one presume." Matthew Henry.
8. Death-bed repentance is rarely true. True repentance can be late, but late repentance is seldom true. "Late repentance is seldom satisfactory." J.C. Ryle. The mind is often not clear and cheap motives easily enter in.

Now is the time to repent, to change your mind about serving sin and self, and flee to Christ, believing that He died for sinners like you. There is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain.

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