

## 26. How far off are you?

October 12, 2008

Korean Air Lines Flight 007, also known as KAL 007, was a Korean Air Lines civilian airliner shot down by Soviet fighter jets on September 1, 1983 just west of Sakhalin island. 269 passengers and crew, including a US congressman, were aboard KAL 007. There were no survivors.

At about 10 minutes after take-off, Korean Air 007 began to deviate to the right (north) 1.5 degrees of its assigned route. The flight data recorder provides no reason for this deviation.

Korean Air 007 continued its night journey, ever increasing its deviation – 184 miles off course until it penetrated Kamchatka's borders of Soviet Union air space. That is about the distance between Tucson and Show Low, AZ.

Eventually, two Soviet Su-15 Flagon interceptors scrambled from Dolinsk-Sokol Airbase fired two air-to-air missiles and shot down KAL 007.

The pilot, copilot and navigator of Korean Air 007 sincerely believed that they were in the right path. 240 passengers on board believed that these crew member knew what they were doing. It was only 1.5 degrees of deviation at the beginning that led to 184 miles far off the course and literal life and death difference.

Many people believe that being a good person according to their own standards make them righteous enough to arrive in heaven when they die. When they are told that they are heading in the wrong direction, they choose to ignore the truth, because the true direction does not fit with their own carnal desires.

### A. TAKING A WRONG PATH WITH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*

You would think that Israel as a nation would have been eagerly expecting the arrival of their Messiah and been prepared to receive Him, but when Jesus Christ came, they rejected Him. Why would they do that? Here are two reasons by Paul:

#### 1) Zeal without knowledge

When the Jews came back from Babylon to their own land, the nation Israel had been cured of idolatry of one kind that was worshiping the actual idols. However, because of their unguarded zeal for God and the Law of God without knowledge, it took a wrong turn and they started to head to another wrong path.

They thought that they could improve upon God's Law and added their own traditions that started with their own interpretations of God's Law. It is known as Mishnah. They put more emphasis on Mishnah which was made by humans over God's Law for them. It became a new kind of idol to them.

Yet to this day, I have not met anyone among unbelievers who does not have his own way of zeal for what he believes spiritually and understand the Bible properly.

## 2) Seeking to establish their own righteousness

When a person tries to establish his or her righteousness rather than submitting to God's, it is nothing more than a total defiance to God.

Jesus clearly tells us, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." For anyone to insist any other ways than the salvation through Jesus, it shows willful, stubborn resistance of that individual against the truth of God.

### B. NOT BY WORK, BUT BY FAITH

*Romans 10:4-8 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):*

The Old Testament Law is ended as far as Christians are concerned. The righteousness of the Law is being fulfilled in the life of the believer through the power of the Spirit.

In v6-8, Paul is quoting the verses from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 and give the passage a deeper spiritual meaning. Let's go from v11 of Deuteronomy 30.

*Deuteronomy 30:1-14 "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*

Apostle Paul is teaching us that righteousness is something done for us, not something we do for ourselves. It comes through faith in Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, who lived a perfect life under the Law, then died and rose again for our salvation.

You don't go to heaven to find Christ with your own righteousness, but you can go to Christ to find heaven with His righteousness. The righteousness that God requires is from the righteousness of Jesus. Until we admit our spiritual poverty, we will not have heavenly riches.

### C. ACCEPTANCE AND CONFESSION

*Romans 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

The Jews, Mormons, Jehovah's Witness and all the other cults and false teachings tell their people that they have to work their ways to heaven. It requires an outward accomplishment, but God demands an inward acceptance and confession.

At the end of almost every service, I give a chance to accept Jesus as the Savior and Lord to those who do not know Him. When people raise their hands to let me know

that they just did so, I ask them to repeat a prayer after me. That prayer is known as the Sinner's Prayer. The Sinner's Prayer is not in the Bible as whole. But this prayer is a combination of several verses from the Bible for a new believer to understand what he or she is doing.

1. I know that I am a sinner. – Romans 3:23
2. I realized that my sins have separated me from You. – Romans 6:23
3. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead. – Romans 10:9
4. So I ask You to be my Savior and Lord. – Romans 10:9, John 14:6

Then I ask those who raised their hands to come forward and pray with the pastor, elder or counselors about their new found faith in Jesus. There is a reason for that.

*Matthew 10:32 "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*

When a person goes through a motion of raising his hands and doing the Sinner's Prayer and come forward without the real faith in Christ, he can completely fool everyone in this place. But he can not fool God who knows the deepest secret of everybody's heart.

#### **D. WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD**

*Romans 10:11-13 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Paul once again quoting from the Old Testament – the Books of Isaiah and Joel, probably for two reasons. One, to reemphasize that salvation by faith has always been God's plan. It is nothing new. It's in the Old Testament, so the Jews, of all people, should have grasped it. A second reason, though, might be that Paul wanted to stress the opening up of the kingdom of God to all people.

A message confined primarily to national Israel in the Old Testament is now spread abroad to all people in the church age. And that's where the personal responsibility of believers comes in today.

#### **E. THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY: PROCLAIMING CHRIST**

*Romans 10:14-15 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? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

Now apostle Paul is shifting his attention from the acceptance or rejection of the message to its delivery. This time apostle Paul is quoting from Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15.

Some people are just gifted, literally, when it comes to evangelism. Those who possess this spiritual gift seem to blend the Gospel into everyday discussion effortlessly without pressure to others. Before you realize it, that person is leading a brand new believer in the Sinner's Prayer.

Not everyone, though, is gifted in evangelism. Not everyone is called to be a dynamic preacher. But we can all talk about our faith at some level, can we not?

Don't say that it is the pastor's job or evangelist's job. No, if you are a born-again Christian, you are commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself to spread the Good News of Him to others. That is known as the Great Commission.

Don't worry about all those "What ifs". If you don't have an answer, say, "I don't know. Let me get back to you on that," or "I will take you to my church this Sunday and let's ask my pastor together."

It is our privilege to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with other people. If someone you know has a heart attack and die without Jesus right then, that person would end up in hell. Don't you want to tell that person about Jesus and eternal life through Him before that happens?

## **F. NOT EVERYONE**

*Romans 10:16-21 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." 19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." 20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." 21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."*

Some unbelievers become down right nasty when they hear a salvation message. I have to wonder what God did so wrong to them that they are completely against Him. Then they are some who go through religious games.

Anyone who has visited our church when I teach, even one time, can not come up with an excuse that they have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Before you leave that door, you get to hear about it at least two or three times at each service. So, if you reject the invitation of Jesus Christ, you are responsible for that, not me. You are on your own, baby.

Israel had the benefit of both Old and New Testaments, because she saw God at work in nature and she received God's written Word. Israel heard, but she would not heed. No wonder Jesus often had to say to the crowds, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear!"

When Israel rejected her Messiah, God sent the Gospel to the Gentiles that they might be saved. This was predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21. God sent the Gospel to the Gentiles so that they might provoke the Jews to jealousy. It was an act of grace both to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

Other than Israel, there is no other country on the earth which has been so blessed like the United States, because our founding fathers were so godly and dedicated for the glory of God. After 232 years, the vast majority of the government officials, senators, congressmen and women, school teachers and the leaders of our society sold their will to carnal and perverse desires. Homosexuality is wrong, abortion is wrong, the separation of church and state is wrong, because it is not how our founding father intended it.

America turned her face away from her Maker and rejected the loving hands of God. Now, God lifted His protective hands away from her and see how she is crumbling each and every day. Remember what we memorized last week?

*2 Chronicles 15:2b The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.*

Just like that tragic Korean Air 007, America started to deviate from God, now she is about to face her fate. You may say, "This is so depressing. I don't believe that." Then show me where you find America in the Book of Revelation. You don't find her anywhere.

## **G. APPLICATIONS**

**1) Ask yourself and answer honestly: "How far off am I from God?"**

You may like to answer that you are close to God, but your own spiritual life may say otherwise. If so, are you going to continue in that course, or are you going to come back to Him?

**2) We all have the Great Commission from the Lord Jesus to fulfill. Tell others about Jesus with your life, not just your words.**