

answer includes four parts, of which the first three are (for evangelicals at least) non-controversial, while the fourth area leads us to the precarious area of speculation.

First, all *human beings*, apart from the intervention and mercy of God, are *perishing* .... "Hell-deserving sinner" sounds an absurdly antiquated phrase, but I believe it is the sober truth. Without Christ I am "perishing" and deserve to perish.

Secondly, *human beings cannot save themselves* by any religious or righteous acts .... Self-salvation is out. In this connection we need to think about Cornelius, because he is the person often chosen to exemplify the upright seeker whom God "accepts" on account of his sincerity and decency .... God honored his reverent spirit, his prayers and his uprightness, and led a messenger of the gospel to him. But his salvation came through his penitent, believing response to the gospel, not through his previous religion and righteousness. I don't think this conclusion can be avoided. Principled exegesis requires it.

Thirdly, *Jesus Christ is the only Savior* ....

That brings me to my fourth point. Here we need to ask questions rather than make statements. If we grant that human beings left to themselves are perishing, and that they cannot save themselves, and that Jesus is the only qualified Savior -- which are three truths which evangelicals are at all costs determined to safeguard -- what condition has to be fulfilled in order that they may be saved? How much knowledge of Jesus do people have to have before they can believe in him? And how much faith do they have to exercise? Those who genuinely hear the gospel must repent and believe, of course. But what about those who have not heard it? They cannot save themselves, as we have seen, and Christ is the only Savior. Is there then any way in which God will have mercy on them, through Christ alone, and not through their own merit? A variety of answers have been given to these