

Are Not the Religions of the Heathen Good Enough for Them

by Oswald J. Smith

Heathen religions are characterized by cruelty and demand human sacrifices, and we must not say that the heathen are better off as they are.

Duration: 12:51

Scripture: Psalm 72:20, Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Heathen"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts horrifying stories of religious practices in different parts of the world. He describes witnessing a young widow being strangled to death by natives, a witch doctor pouring sand into a newborn baby's mouth until it strangles, and a little girl in Africa being cut and scarred in the name of religion. The speaker questions whether such diabolical religions are acceptable and asks if people would be willing to endure such torture for their faith. He emphasizes the need for compassion and the recognition that these practices are not in line with the teachings of the Bible.

Transcript

This is Oswald J. Smith of the People's Church, Toronto, Canada. I am speaking today on the subject, Are Not the Religions of the Heathen Good Enough for Them? Tourists come home and tell us that the heathen are better off as they are, and that their religions are good enough for them. They say they are happy in their heathenism, and that it is a mistake to send missionaries to them.

But we do not think that their own liquor is good enough for them. Oh no, we ship them ours, nor is their own tobacco good enough for them. They must have cigarettes, our cigarettes.

Their own education is not good enough either, so we give them ours. Their medical work also is inadequate, and so ours is substituted. Even their agricultural methods won't do.

So the United Nations introduce ours. Now the Bible says that the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Psalm 72, 20.

And so it is. The trouble is the tourists do not stay long enough to find out. Heathenism is characterized by cruelty.

Fear grips their hearts. They are in constant dread of evil spirits, spirits that must somehow be appeased. I am thinking now of my visit to Africa.

And the story I was told. It was midnight. Suddenly there was a death wail in the village.

A little baby had died. Immediately the witch doctor was called. The villagers were aroused.

Before very long he had pointed on a woman whom he accused of having caused the death of the little one. She immediately protested, insisting that she was innocent, but she had to be tried. They hurried her away to the tree that stood in the center of the village.

She was told to climb it and then hurled herself from the topmost bough. She began to climb. Presently she sat on one of the branches and again protested her innocence.

Everyone knew she was telling the truth. She was one of the finest women in the village, highly respected by all, but the witch doctor had pointed her out as the one guilty. Hence she had to prove her innocence.

Then she commenced climbing again until she had reached the very highest limb of the tree. There she sat, again maintaining her innocence. Then, before the horrified gaze of the missionary, she threw herself down to the hard ground and was instantly killed, most of the bones of her body being broken.

She was thereby judged guilty. Had she been innocent, she would have been unharmed. That, my friends, has happened in the case of hundreds upon hundreds.

Why? Because of religion. Heathen religions demand it. Hence there is no escape.

Would you be willing to take her place? Until you are prepared to accept her religion and give up your Christianity, let no one ever hear you say their religions are good enough for them. If they are not good enough for you, then they are not good enough for them. I am thinking of my visit to the Aborigines of Australia.

Way back in the heart of that continent there is an immense desert where it gets very hot. And there the Aborigines live, almost naked, oftentimes sleeping on the sand. A mother gives birth to a baby.

Someone in the village dies. A victim must be found. Before long, the witch doctor makes his way toward the newborn babe.

The mother clutches it fanatically to her breast. But without a moment's hesitation, the witch doctor tears it from her arms and amid her shrieks and cries, lays it on its back on the sand, forces open its little mouth, takes handfuls of sand and pours it into the open mouth and down the throat until its mouth is filled with sand and the little thing strangles to death. Why? Because their religions demand it.

There must be a human sacrifice. Evil spirits have to be appeased. Would you be willing to change places with that mother? If her religion is good enough for her, then it is good enough for you.

But unless you are willing to take her place and have your little newborn babe torn from your arms and put to death as hers was, you have no right to say that their religions are good enough for them. It is because of religion that these horrible practices are carried on. Do you now think that that mother suffers just as you would suffer? Of course she does.

She feels for her baby as you would feel for your baby. But the witch doctor knows no mercy. The spirits must be satisfied.

Is her religion good enough for her? Then it is good enough for you. I am thinking, too, of my visit to the South Sea Islands. John Geddes was one of the first missionaries to go to the South Sea Islands from Canada.

It was years ago now. As he stepped ashore, he saw a group of people on the ground, the body of a man. Under a tree he saw a young woman.

She was the widow of the man who had died. Suddenly the natives approached her. She was unresisting.

Full well she knew what would happen. They placed a cord around her neck and then commenced to strangle her to death. John Geddes rushed forward in an effort to rescue her, but he was rudely pushed away and told to mind his own business, that if he didn't, he, too, would lose his life.

And there before his horrified eyes he saw that beautiful young woman slowly strangle to death and her body placed beside that of her husband. Why? Because their religion demanded that when a husband died, his widow must be strangled to death to accompany him on his journey. And if the eldest son is old enough, he is the one who must strangle his mother.

Moreover, all the children, if they are too young to support themselves, must likewise be put to death. That is religion, heathen religion. Would you be willing, my friend, to change places with that widow? Could you look forward to such an experience in the event of your husband's death? If their religions are good enough for them, then they are good enough for you.

And if they are not good enough for you, then do not say that they are good enough for them. Never will I forget my visit to India. Many a time as I walked by the side of the river, my mind went back to that day when the body of the husband was placed on a pile of wood, and then the widow, still alive and well, placed beside him, and the two bodies, one dead and the other alive, bound together, and then the whole set on fire.

There amid the shrieks and screams of the dying widow, as she slowly burned to death, the natives gathered around, believing that the evil spirits were being pacified and that now the husband would have his wife in the other life. Do you mean to say that you would be willing to change places with that widow? Thousands upon thousands of widows died in the flames when their husbands died, just because of religion. Are their religions good enough for them? Then they must also be good enough for you.

If you, my friend, would not be willing to exchange places with that widow, giving up your Christianity and taking her heathen religion, then do not say that their religions are good enough for them. And that they are better off as they are. Could a widow be happy enduring such torture? Of course not.

The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. Have you ever known of twin babies to be spared in Africa? Never in heathenism. They are always put to death.

Would you be willing to have your babies, if they happen to be twins, murdered before your eyes? That is what happens in Africa. The witch doctor immediately sees to it that they are destroyed. No twin babies are allowed to live.

Why, you ask? Just because their religions demand it. Would you be willing to change places with them? Are their religions good enough for them? Then they must also be good enough for you. Will I ever forget the story of that Mohammedan who stood before the people in the center of the town and hacked his skull with a great long knife until the blood flowed freely, then took newspapers and stuck them into those open gashes, after which he deliberately struck a match and set the whole on fire.

There he stood, the fire sizzling the blood, burning the paper in the hair, the man enduring the most excruciating agony. Why, you ask? Because of his religion. He must afflict his body.

He must suffer. He must endure torture in order to gain a place in heaven. And so he tormented himself.

Would you be willing to exchange places with him? Would his religion be good enough for you? Could you endure such torment? Would you be willing to suffer as he suffered? O my friend, unless his religion is good enough for you, do not say that it is good enough for him. Come with me to Indochina. We are among the tribe's people.

A helpless little girl is lying on her back, her head held firmly between the knees of an inhuman monster, who with a coarse saw is deliberately sawing her beautiful front teeth off at the gums. The perspiration stands in beads upon her almost naked body as she endures the dreadful pain. Nerves are exposed.

Blood pours from her mouth. Pain indescribable is endured until at last the hideous barbarous operation is over and she is released, released to live her life with nothing but ugly gums. Would you change places with her? What about your own little girl? Would you want her to suffer such torture? Yet countless thousands have borne it, and all because of a heathen religion.

Little innocent victims, unable to escape. That is heathenism. If such a religion is good enough for them, it is good enough for you.

Or come again to dark benighted Africa. Once more it is a little girl, this time a baby. The cruel heartless monster takes his life and cuts her lovely face from the head to the middle of her body in long, long gashes, sometimes more than a hundred of them.

The little one screams in agony. Blood pours from the cuts. Then something is rubbed in to make them fester and produce long ugly ridges that she will wear as long as life lasts.

Oh, but torture! What awful pain and suffering! But there is no escape. It has gone on for centuries. It is going on now, and all in the name of religion.

When will it end? How long, O Lord, how long? Would you change places with her? Are you ready to accept such a diabolical religion? Do you think the heathen are better off as they are? Then you have no heart. God have mercy on you. The heathen are not better off as they are.

They are not happy. They are miserable. They are most unhappy.

They are wretched. They suffer. They are in fear of evil spirits constantly.

They are always attempting to appease them. There is no rest in heathenism, no peace, no joy. Only Jesus Christ can impart joy.

Therefore, let us do everything we possibly can to give them the gospel before it is forever too late, that they may experience the joy that you and I know in Christ. Let us never again say they are better off as they are. Their religions are good enough for them.

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