

JOHN 3:13-21
GOD’S LOVE FOR US!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Keep in mind that John has established who Jesus is before he went any further in writing this Gospel. It is that important. If you don’t know who Jesus is, then what John writes about Jesus won’t make sense and you will have to come up with your own conclusion about Jesus.

And many try to do that, and they feel that Jesus was a good teacher, an example to us on how to live out our faith, a good person, but they reject that fact that He is Almighty God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity!

And if that is how you think of Jesus, then what is being said here in John chapter 3 won’t make any sense. You see, if He is only a good teacher or whatever, not Almighty God, then what John writes about Jesus is empty, it is worthless!

But, like I have said, John has already established the fact that Jesus is Almighty God when he opened up this Gospel.

Listen to how clear this is as John tells us in John 1:1-2, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.**”

And if you still don’t get it, The Amplified Bible makes it very clear as it says, “**IN THE beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. [Isa 9:6.] He was present originally with God.**”

That is foundational for us to understand and as we will see here in John chapter 3, if Jesus is not Almighty God, then we are still condemned and lost. So it is an important fact for us to understand!

In our last study we saw a Pharisee named Nicodemus come to Jesus at night. I called that study – ***NICK AT NIGHT!***

And Nicodemus knew that there was something special about Jesus, but he did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

And Jesus tells this religious man that unless he is born again, he will not see the Kingdom of God!

And Nicodemus was confused, he did not understand what Jesus was saying. Here was a Jewish religious leader, someone who was to teach the people about God, who didn't understand spiritual truths. He did not understand what the Old Testament said about what God was going to do and we can see that clearly in Jeremiah chapter 31!

Remember what D. L. Moody said about being born again. He nails it as he wrote, ***“Being born again . . . is not a reformation - is not a turning over a new leaf, as some call it, is not a making up your mind to simply lead better lives. They must be born of the Spirit, and then they will live according to the Spirit. Unless they do this, reformation will be worthless. To be born again does not merely mean a resolve to be better.”*** Exactly!

John chapter 3 is probably one of the greatest chapters in the entire Bible and John 3:16 one of the most famous verses in the Bible and we see this verse displayed in many places.

But for many, they may wonder what does this man, Nicodemus, who was a very religious man, have to do with me?

The reason it is so important is because so many people have a wrong concept of what Jesus means when He said we must be born again. They look to works and Jesus is telling Nicodemus that his religious works, all the good that he has done and is doing will not save him, it will not get him into heaven. And it will not get us there either!

You see, Jesus is going to show him that the only way to get into heaven is through Him.

That means the only way for Nicodemus, the only way for you, the only way for me, the only way for every person on this planet to get into heaven is through Jesus!

Remember what Peter said in Acts 4:12, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

And that is what we are going to see this morning, that salvation is only through Jesus, no one else, no other thing, not by good works or going to church or whatever!

I have called this study – ***GOD’S LOVE FOR US!***

And that should just make sense if you know what John 3:16 is all about.

I have broken these verses down into four main points. They are,

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS – JOHN 3:13

THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE – JOHN 3:14-15

THE REALITY OF THE CROSS – JOHN 3:16

SALVATION OR CONDEMNATION – JOHN 3:17-21

Now let me share with you what Jesus said in John 3:12 because it will lead into what He will be saying in our study this morning. Jesus said, **“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“If I have told you of things that happen right here on the earth and yet none of you believes Me, how can you believe (trust Me, adhere to Me, rely on Me) if I tell you of heavenly things?”**

And, as we will see, Jesus is going to be speaking about spiritual things that have an affect upon the physical. But before He deals with that, we are going to see – ***THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS!***

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in John chapter 3, beginning in verse 13 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word, and we look at this topic – ***GOD’S LOVE FOR US!***

JOHN 3

VERSE 13

Now is that true, that **“No one has ascended to heaven . . .”**?

Yes and no. Let me explain.

In the Old Testament we see Old Testament saints, like Enoch and Elijah that had gone up into heaven.

So what is the point that Jesus is making here when He said that?

The point He is making is that these Old Testament saints were taken up by God and did not ascend by their own efforts, their own strength, their own goodness and hard work. You see, that is what the Pharisees believed, you just had to be good enough, keep the Law and you would get into heaven!

For us to ascend into heaven we would have to be sinless, we would have to be perfect because that is the only righteousness that God will accept. We see that in John 16:10 where we are told, **“of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more.”**

In other words, Jesus ascended into heaven after His death and resurrection because He was without sin, His righteousness was perfect, and ours is far from that.

And, of course, that is the problem for us. We can't ascend up into heaven in our own righteousness because our righteousness is like filthy rags! (Isaiah 64:6)

Now we tend to focus on the Jewish religious leaders and their works salvation. But we need to understand that every religion on the earth, except for Christianity, is based on human achievement.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that man has to make his way into heaven by doing good works and each good work is another step upward. And, in the end, he is making a – ***STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN!***

But Jesus wants us to be very clear on this. No one will ever make His way into heaven that way, except Jesus Himself. He is the stairway to heaven you might say!

Again, listen to what this verse is saying. **“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man, who is in heaven.”** John 3:13.

And what Jesus is doing here is He is establishing His authority to speak forth these words and because He is the only One who has ascended to heaven, because He is Almighty God, He can share these words. And as he does then we need to believe and apply these truths to our lives!

Now there are many people out there, many religions out there that claim to have the authority to speak forth the words for people to get into heaven, but they don't, only Jesus does because - ***HE IS GOD!***

Let's think about this. Jesus is the only One who could ascend to heaven, we can't ascend to heaven by our own efforts, as I have said.

We could not ascend to where God is, that is the problem. So God came down to where we are and He came to rescue man out of the pit of mire of sin we had fallen into and He is going to lift us up someday, that is the solution to the problem.

But before He can lift us up, He had to be lifted up first!

And that leads us to our next point – ***THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE!***

VERSES 14-15

Make no mistake about it, Jesus was and is a masterful teacher!

Here is this Jewish religious leader, a Pharisee, and this man, Nicodemus did not get it yet. And what we see here is that Jesus takes him back to a story that took place in Numbers chapter 21.

Why did Jesus do that?

Remember what I have titled these verses – ***THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE!***

What Jesus is doing is He is showing Nicodemus how to be born again and He is saying that this story that took place in Numbers chapter 21 points to Him, to Jesus and what He is to do.

Remember what the Psalmist said in Psalm 40:7, **“Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.’”**

And we see Paul quote this in Hebrews 10:7, “**Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come - In the volume of the book it is written of Me - To do Your will, O God.’**”

Now in Psalm 40:7 and in Hebrews 10:7 it would be better translated without the punctuation marks.

It should read, “**... ‘Behold I come in the scroll of the book it is written of me.’**”

In other words, from Genesis through to Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Think about that. Every page, every story, every illustration, everything in some way speaks of Jesus; it is a picture of Him.

Remember what Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders in John 5:39-40, “**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**”

You see, they searched the Scriptures looking for abundant life, but the Scriptures spoke of Jesus, where that abundant life is found, and they missed it!

And we are no different today. Look at the people who have read the Scriptures and they miss Jesus in them. How they do that I don’t get it; they have to willfully reject what is being said.

But from the very beginning of the book, in Genesis all the way through to the end we see Jesus. Don’t miss Him!

And here, in this picture that Jesus is giving to us of the serpent on the pole is very interesting.

You may remember the story; the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness after being set free from their bondage in Egypt and they once again were complaining. God therefore sent a judgment upon them, serpents.

Now that may not seem fair, it may not seem right, but think about all that they had seen so far.

They were set free from their bondage in Egypt. As they were heading to the Promise Land the Egyptians came after them and they were cornered by the Red Sea.

And God opened up the Red Sea for them to pass through on dry ground and when the Egyptians followed hard after them, the waters fell down upon them drowning every one of them.

That was an amazing miracle that they all witnessed. But now they forgot about it!

Now they are in a desert, some two to three million people and no water. So they complain again, and God provides water for them in the wilderness.

Another amazing miracle that they all witnessed. But now they forgot about it!

The food supply was low. How do you feed all those people? So they complained again. And God provided Mana for them or bread from heaven.

Another miracle that they all witnessed. But now they forgot about it!

And I can go on, but you can clearly see that God's hand was upon them and they saw it, they witnessed it, they knew it. And yet, when you get into a difficult time, you tend to blame God for all that has happened and that is what they were doing here in Numbers chapter 21.

Listen to what transpired here in Numbers 21:4-6, **“Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.’ So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.”**

They forgot all that God had done for them and in their anger, in their frustration, they blame God for all they are going through!

In their minds, as they complain to Moses, they are blaming him that he has led them into the wilderness to die. Now Moses did not do that, but God led them, and God was going to provide for them, but they lost sight of that fact and complained.

We need to be careful here because it is very easy to complain about situations that we find ourselves in and we can start to even blame God.

“Lord, you know I work very hard for you. I serve you every day. No one else wants to, but I do! So why is this happening to me. Did you bring me to this point to let me die?”

And you can put in that complaining whatever you want, and it still won't make it right just as we see here with the children of Israel.

I am not saying that what you are going through is easy, that it is not painful, but look to the One who can give you that peace, that comfort as you are going through these times and understand that He is in control just as He was in the life of Job.

So here in the camp of Israel, as the people were bitten by these serpents they began to die.

And the people saw their sin. We are told in Numbers 21:7 what took place, **“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people.”**

And Moses steps in and intercedes for the people. As he does, we see that God responds by telling Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it upon a pole in the camp. Then, when anyone is bitten by these serpents, if they would look to this bronze serpent on a pole, they would be healed. If they didn't, they would die.

What is that all about?

First of all, this bronze serpent on a pole we see portrayed with the serpent wrapped around the pole, but I don't think that is how it was made.

The pole itself was vertical and the serpent I think was horizontal on that pole and it made a picture of the cross! I think God is very good with His pictures!

Now for many, they heard what Moses said and they thought it was the stupidest, most ridiculous thing in the world to do. They needed a medic or some anti-snake venom, not to look upon this serpent on a pole. Thus, when they were bitten, they refused to listen to what Moses told them and look to that serpent on a pole and they died!

Now before we are too harsh on them, think about placing yourself in that situation. You have seen what happened to others who were bitten by these serpents, they died. And now, if you get bit, you are to look upon this serpent on a pole and you would be healed. And as ridiculous as that may sound, it is an act of faith.

And this is not an empty faith, it is a faith that is placed in a promise of God and thus, the faith has substance to it.

And there were others, when they were bitten, they looked upon this bronze serpent on a pole by faith and they were healed, they lived!

Now what in the world does that have to do with Jesus?

Everything!

You see, bronze in the Scriptures speaks of judgment and the serpent speaks of sin. Thus, this bronze serpent on a pole spoke of the judgment of sin and Jesus is saying that when He is lifted up, placed on the cross, all our sins will be judged as He became sin for us and paid in full the penalty for our sins.

In Isaiah 45:22 we are told, “**Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.**”

Also, in Isaiah 53:5-6 we are told, “**But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**”

And Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

Thus, all who look upon Jesus, receive Him will live and all those who reject Him, think it is foolish to look upon someone dying on the cross for our sins, will die!

You see, as you look by faith at the cross of Jesus, receive Him, you are born again!

What I also want you to see here is that there was only one way to be healed from these serpent bites.

It was not a healing anyway you felt!

The same it is with salvation, with being born again. People today have so many ways that they feel they can be saved and none of them will hold any water except the One way, and that is through Jesus Christ!

Jesus said in John 14:6, “**. . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**”

And that is what we see today. People who look at salvation through Jesus Christ as foolishness and they will die in their sins. They have been bitten by sin and the only cure has been provided by God through Jesus Christ. Tragically, they will die needlessly but to those who look to the Cross, look to Jesus, they will be saved!

Let me share this with you. It is a story from Warren Wiersbe, and this is what he wrote,

On January 6, 1850, a snowstorm almost crippled the city of Colchester, England; and a teenage boy was unable to get to the church he usually attended.

So he made his way to a nearby Primitive Methodist chapel, where an ill-prepared layman was substituting for the absent preacher.

His text was Isaiah 45:22 - "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

For many months this young teenager had been miserable and under deep conviction; but though he had been reared in church (both his father and grandfather were preachers), he did not have the assurance of salvation.

The unprepared substitute minister did not have much to say, so he kept repeating the text. "A man need not go to college to learn to look," he shouted. "Anyone can look - a child can look!"

About that time, he saw the visitor sitting to one side, and he pointed at him and said, "Young man, you look very miserable. Young man, look to Jesus Christ!"

The young man did look by faith, and that was how the great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted.

The difference between perishing and living, and between condemnation and salvation, is faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus could well have come to this world as a Judge and destroyed every rebellious sinner; but in love, He came to this world as our Saviour, and He died for us on the cross! He became the “uplifted serpent.”

The brass serpent in Moses’ day brought physical life to dying Jews; but Jesus Christ gives eternal life to anyone who trusts Him. He has salvation for a whole world!

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 238

As simple as this is, to look to Jesus and ask Him to be your Lord and Savior and you will be saved, if you don’t, you will die in your sins. Spurgeon recognized that and came to saving faith and all who do will be saved!

Now as we read on, we will be reading one of the most taught upon verses in the entire Bible. But we need to understand that John 3:16 and really the first 16 verses of John chapter 3, are based upon two important statements given by Jesus and these statements are based upon one word – ***MUST!***

Let me show you what I mean.

In John 3:7 we are told, “**Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’**”

This first “**must**” is for the sinner, you ***MUST*** be born again!

The next one we see is in John 3:14, where Jesus said, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.**”

This “**must**” is for our Savior, it is for Jesus, He ***MUST*** be lifted up!

And as you put those two “**must**” statements together, they bring us to John 3:16!

And as we will see, this invitation is open to everyone.

But here we have seen – ***THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURE!***

And now, as we read on, we will see – ***THE REALITY OF THE CROSS!***

VERSE 16

As we have seen going through the Gospel's is that Jesus is a master communicator.

Here in John 3:16, with just these 25 words, He gives to us the ***Father's heart – He loves the world***, you and me!

Morris adds to this thought, ***“The Jew was ready enough to think of God as loving Israel, but no passage appears to be cited in which any Jewish writer maintains that God loved the world. It is a distinctively Christian idea that God's love is wide enough to embrace all mankind.”***

That is an important point, that God loves the world so much. And when the word **“world”** is used it is not speaking of plants, or trees, or oceans or mountains. It is speaking of the people of this world!

It is not that God loves just a select few but He loves everyone and has died for everyone, they need to receive that love into their lives by repenting of their sins and asking Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their life. It is an open invitation to all.

Then we see Jesus give to us ***the Father's plan – He gave His only begotten Son*** to be sin for us, to pay the penalty for our sins.

Alford puts it like this, ***“These words seem to carry a reference to the offering of Isaac; and Nicodemus in that case would at once be reminded by them of the love there required, the substitution there made, and the prophecy there uttered to Abraham.”***

And lastly, He gives to us ***His will – that whoever believes will be saved***, not just a quantity of life but a quality of life!

And please understand this is not speaking of a limited atonement or that Jesus died only for some as Reformed Theology or Calvinism teaches. This verse alone refutes that idea. God's gift of eternal life is for "**whoever believes in Him**" and I am so thankful for that.

These words of Jesus here in John 3:16 are so rich, they are so beautiful and out of the 31,373 verses in the Bible, it may be the most popular, the most often used.

But many people, even though they have read it, they know it, they have not applied it to their lives where they can have that abundant joy that is only found in Jesus! They are not born again because they are still trying to work their way into heaven and that will never happen. You can never be good enough to get in, you must be perfect and apart from the righteousness of Christ applied to your life by faith, you will not make it.

I like how Bruce summed this up for us. He wrote, ***"If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind. No sacrifice was too great to bring its unmeasured intensity home to men and women: the best that God had to give, he gave – his only Son, his well-beloved."***

One writer put it like this, and it is important that we understand this. He wrote,

The message of salvation is regeneration - not reformation. Paul says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The new birth is not an overhaul of the "old wreck," or a new paint job.

The old Adamic nature is so incorrigibly corrupt that even God will not attempt to fix it up. He insists on completely rejecting the old hulk and making a new man.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:6, 7).

The old nature received at birth is hopeless, and dressing it up with education and culture only makes it more dangerous than before.

The more we work on the “old man,” the more deceptive it becomes.

Do you know why the sinner must be born anew?

Because he was born all wrong the first time. He doesn't have to be taught to go his own way - it comes naturally to him. But by the new birth he is turned around and headed in the right direction!

Spurgeon told of a missionary who visited a primitive hut and became nauseated by the filthy floor on which he had to sit.

He suggested to his host that they scrub the dirty surface with soap and water, but the man replied, “the floor is just clay - packed down and dry. Add water and it turns to mud. The more you try to wash it, the worse the mess becomes!”

Yes, the hut needed something besides an earthen floor. So it is with the human heart: it is hard and dirty, and nothing will help it. Man needs a new heart. He must be born again from above!

- M. R. De Haan, Our Daily Bread

Now I need to make another point here because some feel that if you die apart from Christ you are annihilated, you cease to exist.

That is not true. Everyone will spend eternity somewhere; we just have to choose where we spend eternity. Either heaven with the Lord or the Lake of Fire apart from Him!

You see that word “**perish**” in verse 16 is APOLETAI in the Greek and it is not speaking of annihilation for those that refuse to believe but a final destiny of ruin in Hell apart from God, who is life, who is truth, who is joy!

God wants to save but He will not force anyone, He will invite them to come and then it is up to each individual to respond.

Listen again to these words, that you have heard so many times before, but I pray you hear them anew or in a fresh way as you see God’s love for you that He gave His only begotten Son. And the wonderful thing is that this gift is for all who would believe in Him and if you do you will have everlasting life.

Or, as Jesus said, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**”

Let me sum it up like this. These words are from Ray Stedman. He wrote,

That is how to be born again. Let us remind ourselves of those words in the first chapter of John: “To all who received him [to all who did business with Jesus by faith, who asked him to enter their lives and save them, deliver them, lead them out, change their nature], who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God: who were born [born again] not of blood [not something you inherited from your ancestors] nor of the will of the flesh [not by your own desire and determination] nor of the will of man [nobody else can do this for you, no bishop, no priest, no pope, no one], but of God.”

Born of God. Unless you have that new life you cannot see the kingdom of God. That is the word of Jesus.

But that new life is available to anyone. Anyone can be born again if he will acknowledge his need of Jesus and receive him.

That new change occurs by the power of God himself. Nicodemus needed to know that; everyone needs to know that. This is the greatest act of any life.

This is where eternal life begins. I am sure there are some here this morning who have never been born again. You have been wanting to do right, you are longing for God.

A young man came up to me after the first service and said, “I have been wanting God all my life. This morning you told me how to find him.” There are people wanting God, hungry for him, wanting to be right, wanting to be freed, sensing the emptiness and the futility of their own efforts.

This is the way to receive him.

This is the way to be born again.

- <https://bit.ly/3vMU68g>

So we have seen – ***THE REALITY OF THE CROSS!***

And as we read on, we will look at – ***SALVATION OR CONDEMNATION!***

So let’s read on and see what else Jesus has to say to Nicodemus and to us.

VERSES 17-21

Like I have said, I have called these verses – ***SALVATION AND CONDEMNATION!***

And there is a reason for that. You see, we all have choices to make, to come to Christ or to reject Him, as I have said.

If we come to Him, He gives to us the gift of ***SALVATION!***

If we reject Him, we are ***CONDEMNED!***

And as verse 17 opens up here in John chapter 3 it says, “**For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world . . .**”

That is an interesting statement when you think about it.

Why didn't God condemn us?

Are we good and thus, there was no reason for God to condemn us?

We know that is not true, we are sinners, that is what the Bible tells us. In Romans 3:23 Paul wrote, “**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”

Also, Paul wrote in Romans 3:10-12, “**As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.’**”

So how many people have sinned?

Paul tells us, the Bible tells us – ***ALL!***

So how many people in this world do good?

Paul tells us, the Bible tells us – ***NONE!***

I know, I still have not answered the question why God does not condemn us!

When you think about it, the answer is simple.

The reason God does not condemn us is because we are already condemned!

You see, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Our sin before a holy and righteous God has already condemned us.

The problem for many today is that they see themselves as basically good and thus, they don't need a Savior. God will allow them into heaven because they are good people.

It is interesting because we see this in Proverbs 20:6, where we are told, “**Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?**”

Isn't that the way most people feel about themselves? They proclaim their own goodness and that is easy for us to do. But when God looks at our lives, not just our actions, but what is in our heart, the motivation of our heart, He sees it all and it is not good!

Let me share this with you because this survey is very sad. Listen to what they wrote,

A survey conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University finds that American adults today increasingly adopt a “salvation-can-be-earned” perspective.

A plurality of adults (48 percent) believe that if a person is generally good, or does enough good things during their life, they will “earn” a place in heaven. Only one-third of adults (35 percent) disagree.

A majority of Americans who describe themselves as Christian (52 percent) also accept a “works-oriented” means to God's acceptance - even those associated with churches whose official doctrine says eternal salvation comes only from embracing Jesus Christ as savior.

Almost half of all adults associated with Pentecostal (46 percent), mainline Protestant (44 percent), and evangelical (41 percent) churches, as well as nearly two-thirds of Catholics (70 percent), hold that view. . . .

Christians who believe that salvation can be earned need to read the New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew tells of a rich young man who asked Jesus what good works he must do to inherit eternal life (Matt. 19:16). Jesus responded that if the man wanted to be judged by his works, then he must keep the entire Law - and do so perfectly. The young man thought he had done enough good works to earn a place in heaven because he was judging himself by man-made standards rather than the perfect standard of God. But that's not how it works. As the apostle James clarifies, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (Jam. 2:10).

Because we can't keep the Law perfectly, we have to rely on someone who did - Jesus (1 Pet. 2:22). . . .

This survey shows that too many Christians aren't Christians at all. They are not relying on the finished work in Christ but trusting that their own works will be judged worthy by God.

There are many reasons why this belief is prevalent among self-identified Christians, but a primary cause is that they likely haven't *heard* the gospel. . . .

This survey should be a reminder how easy it is for people to slip back in to relying on themselves, and how we need to constantly proclaim the gospel - to ourselves and our neighbors - until we fully realize that we can only be rescued from our sin through what Jesus accomplished by his life, death, and resurrection.

- <https://bit.ly/3dprKuk>

What a sad set of affairs and that is why we need to understand what Jesus is saying here, what He is saying to Nicodemus!

You see, we didn't need more condemnation we needed salvation and thus, God sent forth His Son to give to us salvation through His shed blood on the cross of Calvary!

Jesus has come to give us life, to save us. That is why He came!

Let me share this with you and you will see the compassion that Jesus has for us. We are told,

At a railway station in New Jersey a little girl stepped up to a shackled criminal, and looking tenderly into his face, said: "Oh, man, I am so sorry for you."

It made him very angry, and he tried to strike her.

Her mother forbade her to go near him again.

But as they all waited for the train the mother's eyes were turned away, and once more the little tot stole up to the wretched man and tenderly whispered to him: "Poor man, Jesus Christ is so sorry for you."

He stared and gave a low groan and offered no violence.

Suddenly the train came, the officers led him away, and the two parted forever.

But years afterwards the man came forth from prison a Christian and an evangelist, and he loved to tell how the compassion of the Lord Jesus from the lips of a little child broke his heart, subdued his spirit, saved his soul. It is not our sympathy men want, but His!

- Heartwarming Bible Illustrations

It is the love of God that leads us to repentance. Yes, for some, they need to be dangled over the fires of Hell to see what awaits them. But again, I think most people need the love of God!

Now, as Christians, as we have come to Christ, listen to what Paul said in Romans 8:1, **“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”**

Why do we as Christians condemn ourselves?

Because we are not living up to a standard that we have set or believe that God has set. And thus, the condemnation. We beat ourselves up! God is not doing that; He will convict us of sin but He will never condemn us because Jesus has set us free!

And yes, apart from Christ we are condemned, but in Christ we are not, and Paul made that very clear.

And Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”**

Now you may be thinking, *“That is great for those who have heard of Christ, but what about those who have never had the opportunity to believe, they have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ?”*

Paul does speak about that in Romans chapters 1 and 2, but that is not what Jesus is dealing with here. Jesus is speaking of those who deliberately reject the message of Christ. They heard the truth, and they just refuse to accept it.

I like the way that Bruce looks at this. He wrote, *“No explicit mention is made here of those who have never had the opportunity of believing in Christ, those on whom the light in its fullness has never shone. But John’s words probably unfold the principle of their judgment too. As the eternal Word came to men and women before becoming incarnate in Christ, so it is with the light of God. If men and women are judged by their response to the light, they are judged by their response to such light as is available to them.”*

And because I know that God loves sinful man, no matter what, the heavens declare the glory of God and any person who is searching for the God who created the heavens and the earth, God will reveal Himself to that person! God is a just judge and thus, whatever He does is right, it is perfect! Never forget that!

And thus, there is this choice. Eternal life in Christ or eternal separation from Christ in the Lake of Fire!

But never negate the love that God has for sinful man. He loves man so much that He sent His Son to pay the price for our sin, to die for our sin, to shed His blood for our sin!

Let me share this with you. We are told,

Years ago I read a moving story about a young man who had quarreled with his father and left home. He continued to keep in touch with his mother, and wanted very badly to come home for Christmas, but he was afraid his father would not allow him.

His mother wrote to him and urged him to come home, but he did not feel he could until he knew his father had forgiven him. Finally, there was no time for any more letters. His mother wrote and said she would talk with the father, and if he had forgiven him, she would tie a white rag on the tree which grew right alongside the railroad tracks near their home, which he could see before the train reached the station.

If there was no rag, it would be better if he went on.

So the young man started home. As the train drew near his home; he was so nervous he said to his friend who was traveling with him, "I can't bear to look. Sit in my place and look out the window. I'll tell you what the tree looks like and you tell me whether there is a rag on it or not."

So his friend changed places with him and looked out the window. After a bit the friend said, "Oh yes, I see the tree."

The son asked, "Is there a white rag tied to it?"

For a moment the friend did not say anything. Then he turned, and in a very gentle voice said, "There is a white rag tied to every limb of that tree!"

That, in a sense, is what God is saying in John 3:16 and 17. God has removed the condemnation and made it possible to come freely and openly home to him.

- <https://bit.ly/3vMU68g>

What a wonderful gift that God has extended to all of mankind and yet, here is the painful truth for those who refuse to come to Jesus.

They are and will remain condemned until they do. God has done everything possible to save us except force us, now it is up to us to receive that gift.

But why won't they come to Jesus?

We don't have to guess because Jesus tells us in John 3:19-21, "**And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**"

And this just makes sense. You see, they enjoy sin and thus, when the light of God exposes their evil, their sin, they fight against it, try to extinguish it, to put it out.

Make no mistake about it, light always exposes the darkness and when God shines on a person's heart, if they refuse to receive it, they will flee from it.

They don't want to change, and they don't want their sin exposed, although now it seems like we are living in a time where people have no problem flaunting their sin!

Look at what is going on just in this nation.

But here is the wonderful news, if you come to the truth, to Jesus, your life will reflect that new nature you have, the nature of God as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:17, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**"

Clarke sums it up like this as he wrote, "*They chose to walk in the darkness, that they might do the works of darkness - they broke the Divine law, refused the mercy offered to them, are arrested by Divine justice, convicted, condemned, and punished. Whence, then, does their damnation proceed? From THEMSELVES.*"

How true that is!

Remember what I have said that John 3:16 and really the first 16 verses of John chapter 3 are based upon two important statements given by Jesus and these statements are based upon one word – ***MUST!***

In John 3:7 we are told, **“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You *must* be born again.’”**

This first **“*must*”** is for the sinner, you ***MUST*** be born again!

The next one we see is in John 3:14, where Jesus said, **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up.”**

This **“*must*”** is for our Savior, it is for Jesus, He ***MUST*** be lifted up!

And I will close with this, these precious words from our Lord and Savior to us and I pray that we hold these truths close to our hearts and never forget what God has done for us.

Jesus said, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”**